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EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In the year 1777 the booksellers of London, fearing an invasion of their literary preserves by the publication at Edinburgh of an edition of the British Poets from Chaucer to Churchill, resolved on publishing a rival edition, more correct in text than that of Bell, and at the same time superior in print and paper. To give a greater attraction to their undertaking, they agreed that to the works of each author a concise account of his life should be prefixed, and Dr. Johnson, as the most distinguished of his contemporaries, was solicited to undertake the task. Johnson was pleased with the offer, and undertook to write what he describes in a letter to Boswell as "little Lives and little Prefaces to a little edition of the English Poets."

The Edinburgh collection thus dreaded by the London trade was the first attempt to form a complete body of British poetry, and in its design the publication set on foot by an unassisted individual in Edinburgh is preferable to the collection made by the trade in London. Neither, however, is good, whether for general accuracy of text, or the selection of authors. Many who have hardly a claim to be considered poets were admitted by the courtesy of criticism into both editions, the right of selection resting, in both instances oddly enough, with the booksellers, in whose judgment, as men of trade, the Poet whose works were not in demand was doubly dead. The Drama was excluded. Four insignificant poets, Blackmore, Pomfret, Yalden, and Watts, were recommended by Johnson for insertion in the London collection; and beyond the Prefaces (afterwards reprinted as Lives) this recommendation of

four small poets made all he had to do with an edition which he wrote to Nichols to say was "impudently" called his.

When persuaded to promise little Lives and little Prefaces to a London edition of our Poets, the undertaking, as then presented to his mind, Johnson tells us, seemed not very extensive, or, as he had first written it, not very *tedious* or difficult. "My purpose," he says, "was only to have allotted to every Poet an advertisement, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure." A slight sketch slowly expanded into a detailed life, a short character into a general criticism, and what was undertaken as a light employment became not only the last but the greatest work of its author.

It was at one time the intention of the London booksellers to have commenced with Chaucer. King George the Third wished that Johnson had commenced with Spenser, and Beattie expressed his regret that he had not given Spenser instead of Cowley. Yet a criticism on 'The Faerie Queene' would hardly have supplied Johnson with points of equal value to those which in Cowley led to his admirable observations on the so-called Metaphysical Poets; nor is it possible to avoid feeling the partial truth of an observation by Southey, that the poets before the Restoration were to Johnson what the world before the flood is to historians. It is much to be regretted, however, that the petty interest of a bookseller named Carnan should have excluded Goldsmith from the number of his Lives.

Of all works of eminence it is curious to trace the gradual growth, and the history of the 'Lives of the Poets' from commencement to completion is not devoid of interest. Johnson's first object was to discover what materials were readily available, to gather round him books necessary for the undertaking, and to obtain what further information public libraries or private individuals might supply to printed narratives. Seeing the scantiness of Murdoch's 'Memoir of Thomson,' he requested Boswell to procure what information he could in Scotland con-

cerning him; and from the following letter it will be seen that he at least entered into his task with ardour.

"To Dr. Farmer.

"Sir, "Bolt Court, July 22, 1777.

"The booksellers of London have undertaken a kind of body of English Poetry, excluding generally the dramas; and I have undertaken to put before each author's works a sketch of his life, and a character of his writings. Of some, however, I know but very little, and I am afraid I shall not easily supply my deficiencies. Be pleased to inform me whether among Mr. Baker's MSS., or anywhere else at Cambridge, any materials are to be found. If any such collection can be gleaned, I doubt not your willingness to direct *our* search, and will tell the booksellers to employ a transcriber. If you think my inspection necessary, I will come down; for who that has once experienced the civilities of Cambridge would not snatch the opportunity of another visit?

"I am, Sir, your most humble servant,

"Sam. Johnson."

Nor was he without friends able and willing to assist him. Lord Hailes sent communications for the memoirs of Dryden and Thomson; Cradock lent him a copy of Euripides with Milton's MS. notes; and through Dr. Percy he obtained the use of Clifford's remarks on Dryden, which he had long been looking for in vain. Joseph Warton contributed some useful information to the Lives of Fenton, Collins, and Pitt. Malone and Isaac Reed assisted him when he sought assistance at their hands, while Steevens, his old associate in editing Shakespeare, supplied him with many particulars, enlivening, as he says, and diversifying his work. As he advanced, other and more valuable assistance was obtained, and Mrs. Boscawen procured him the use of Spence's MS. anecdotes, a favour which he thought worthy "of public acknowledgment."

The first Life written was that of Cowley, sent to press in December, 1777. Waller, Denham, and Butler immediately followed. "I have written a little of the Lives of the Poets," he says in his annual review of his life made Easter, 1778, "I think with all my usual vigour." Dryden was completed in August, 1778, and Milton, begun in January, 1779, was finished in six weeks. The other lives included in the first

issue were sixteen in number, and, being very short, were soon written.

In March, 1779, the first part, containing twenty-two Lives, appeared simultaneously with the poems, and separately in four small volumes. "Last week," he says in his annual review made Easter, 1779, "I published (the first part of) the 'Lives of the Poets,' written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety." . . . "I got my Lives," he writes to Mrs. Thrale, "not yet quite printed, put neatly together, and sent them to the King. What he says of them I know not. If the King is a Whig, he will not like them; but is any king a Whig?"

Other and ampler notices of the second and last portion occur in his letters to Mrs. Thrale. "I have not quite neglected my 'Lives,'" he writes April 6, 1780; "Addison is a long one, but it is done; Prior is not short, and that is done too. I am upon Rowe, which cannot fill much paper. Seward called on me to-day and read Spence." Five days later he continues to report the progress he has made. "You are at all places of high resort, and bring home hearts by dozens, while I am seeking for something to say of men about whom I know nothing but their verses, and sometimes very little of them. Now I have begun, however, I do not despair of making an end." "I thought to have finished Rowe's life to-day," he writes, April 15, 1780, "but I have had five or six visitors who hindered me, and I have not been quite well: next week I hope to despatch four or five of them." "My Lives creep on," he writes, May 9, 1780. "I have done Addison, Prior, Rowe, Granville, Sheffield, Collins, Pitt, and almost Fenton." Congreve was his next Life, and was soon written. "Congreve, whom I despatched at the Borough while I was attending the election, is one of the best of the little Lives."

He now made a second application to Dr. Farmer, asking (May 25, 1780) for extracts from college or university registers relating to Ambrose Philips, Broome, and Gray, who were all of Cambridge; but his progress, in spite of prompt assistance, was still inconsiderable. "I have sat at home in Bolt Court all the

summer," he writes to Boswell, August 21, 1780, "thinking to write the 'Lives,' and a great part of the time only thinking. Several of them, however, are done, and I still think to do the rest." This still thinking and not performing brought other difficulties, and as time began to press, he gladly adopted a life of Dr. Young, written by Herbert Croft, then an unknown man ambitious of literary distinction. He was willing to have obtained other favours of a like character, for the progress of his undertaking had brought him to the task of writing the lives of his contemporaries, and of some still younger than himself. He did not care for the new school of poetry, nor for the poets themselves. He knew his own prejudices, hurried through his work, and brought it to a close.

"Some time in March" (he observes in his annual review made Easter, 1781) "I finished the 'Lives of the Poets,' which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with *vigour and haste*." What he has said of Addison and "Cato" is still more applicable to his own achievement. "Cato," he says, "was at length completed, but with brevity irregularly disproportionate to the foregoing parts, like a task performed with reluctance and hurried to its conclusion."

The 'Lives of the Poets' made a stir at the time in the world of letters. A cry was raised on more grounds than one against his Life of Milton. "I could thrash his old jacket," writes Cowper, "till I made his pension jingle in his pocket." All Cambridge was in arms against what Mackintosh has called "that monstrous example of critical injustice which he entitles the Life of Gray." The same feeling was expressed against his criticism on Collins, and only less generally because the reputation of that poet was but then upon the rise. The friends of Lord Lyttelton were annoyed at the contempt, artful and studied as they called it, thrown upon the character of a nobleman who, with all the little foibles he might have, was, in their eyes, one of the most exalted patterns of virtue, liberality, and benevolence. Great displeasure was expressed with equal justice at his account of Thomson, while his censure of Aken-

side was thought by many what it really is, illiberal, and his criticism on Prior was condemned as "severe and unjust."

Notwithstanding these and other complaints of the spirit in which the 'Lives' were written, Johnson's great work obtained an immediate popularity which has continued to our own time, and will certainly continue unimpaired. "Biography," says this greatest of biographers, "is of the various kinds of narrative writing that which is most eagerly read, and most easily applied to the purposes of life."[1] This was said long before the 'Lives of the Poets' were even thought of, and it is in this application of others' lives to the purposes and nicer uses of our own, that the essential value of Johnson's work may be said to consist. The secret of Johnson's excellence will be found in the knowledge of human life which his 'Lives' exhibit; in the many admirable reflections they contain, varying and illustrating the narrative without overlaying it; in the virtue they hold up to admiration, and in the religion they inculcate. He possessed the rare art of teaching what is not familiar, of lending an interest to a twice-told tale, and of recommending known truths by his manner of adorning them. He seized at once the leading features, and though he may have omitted a pimple or a freckle, his likeness is unmistakeable—defined yet general, summary yet exact.

The industry of Johnson was exerted and exhausted in his Dictionary. After that great task indolence overtook him, from which he never altogether recovered. Those common necessities which before compelled him to write, no longer existed, and his pension only added to his disinclination for work. When he engaged to write the 'Lives of the Poets,' he was in his seventieth year, and in the full vigour of his faculties, yet he wrote, as we have seen, dilatorily and hastily, and almost without books. Deservedly held as the greatest writer of his time, he was aware of the importance of the task he had undertaken, and of what would be expected from him. He knew his strength, and that the value of his work would not depend on the minute succession of facts, but on the characters, drawn as they would be

[1] 'Idler,' No. 84, November 24, 1759.

from books and men, and marked with a happiness of illustration almost peculiar to himself. He had read with critical eyes the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man from the depths of stratagem to the surface of affectation. He knew also his own prejudices, for he had already described in print the temptations which beset and mislead a biographer: —"He that writes the life of another is either his friend or his enemy, and wishes either to exalt his praise or aggravate his infamy: many temptations to falsehood will occur in the disguise of passions, too specious to fear much resistance. Love of virtue will animate panegyric, and hatred of wickedness embitter censure. The zeal of gratitude, the ardour of patriotism, fondness for an opinion, or fidelity to a party, may easily overpower the vigilance of a mind habitually well disposed, and prevail over unassisted and unfriended veracity."[2]

Dictatorial in conversation and confident in his own resources, he delighted in argument; nor was he at times over scrupulous in his manner of obtaining victory. He remembered an early observation of his own: "Censure is willingly indulged, because it always implies some superiority."[3] The same seeking for superiority is to be found in the 'Lives of the Poets,'—and the reader is now and then required to see the Doctor and Dictator triumphant over the subject of his narrative.

When Boswell remarked that in writing a life a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character, Johnson observed in reply, "Sir, there is no doubt as to peculiarities: the question is whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely; for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example than good by telling the whole truth." Yet he observed on another occasion, and to Boswell, that "it would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it." Indeed he was not always true to himself. When asked if it was not wrong in Orrery to

[2] 'Idler,' No. 84. [3] 'Rambler,' No. 2.

expose the defects of a man with whom he had lived in intimacy, he replied, "Why, no, Sir, after the man is dead; for then it is done historically." And that man was Swift.

Of the errors into which Johnson has fallen in his 'Lives,' some account may be expected by the readers of this edition. They are of two kinds—those attributable to the imperfect information of his period, and those due to his own neglect. Thus, in the first written of the 'Lives,' that of Cowley, he tells us in one place that Cowley's unfinished epic is in three books, and in another place (a few pages on) that it is in four. We may safely suspect that he had never read Cowley's Comedy—for he mistakes its title. In his 'Waller' he finds fault with Fenton for an error made by himself, from confounding two poems. In the same life he calls Hampden the uncle of Waller instead of the cousin. In his 'Life of Milton' he cites Philips (Milton's nephew) for a remarkable statement not to be found in Philips, and attributes to Ellwood (Milton's Quaker friend) the preservation of a doubtful story said to have come from Milton's own lips, which is certainly not in Ellwood;—while he states oddly enough "that 'Paradise Lost,' originally published in ten books, was made into twelve by dividing the seventh and twelfth," meaning of course the seventh and tenth. Where his preparations had been greater, he is still more inaccurate. Thus he says of Dryden's 'King Arthur' what is true of Albion and Albanius; mistakes the origin of 'Mac Flecknoe,' and the date of its appearance; informs his readers that King James and not King Charles made Dryden historiographer; assigns Dryden's translation of Maimbourg to a period subsequent to his conversion, when it was well known that it appeared while Charles the Second was yet alive; states positively—and in two places—that Dryden translated only one of Ovid's Epistles, whereas he translated at least two; attributes to Settle what is by Pordage; and, from not looking into Burnet for himself, makes Dryden the author of an answer actually written by Varillas.

Let me continue, though briefly, the enumeration. He is altogether wrong about Cowley's parentage. He makes Lord Roscommon live into King James's reign; calls Lord Ro-

chester's daughter his sister; refers to Palaprat's 'Alcibiade,' when there is no such production; makes 'Venice Preserved' the last of Otway's plays, which it was far from being; writes the 'Life of the Earl of Dorset,' and in three other places advances him to a dukedom, which he never obtained; ascribes to Walsh what was written by Chetwood; asserts that Addison never printed his poem to Sacheverell, whereas it is to be seen with his other earliest printed productions in so common a book as Tonson's Miscellany; confounds Sir Richard Steele with Dicky Norris the actor; attributes a discovery to Congreve—that Pindaric odes were regular—when the discovery is to be found in Ben Jonson and Philips's 'Theatrum Poetarum;' taxes Warburton with making an arrangement of Pope's Epistles, which Pope himself had made; informs us in the 'Life of Pope' that the Pastorals of Philips and Pope appeared for the first time in the same Miscellany, but forgets his information when he comes to the life of Philips. While he is wrong in the years of birth of Savage, Somervile, Yalden, and Collins, he is equally incorrect respecting the dates of death of Dryden, Garth, Parnell, and Collins.

Boswell complains that Johnson was by no means attentive to minute accuracy, and omitted when reprinting his Lives to correct the errors that were pointed out to him. Indeed, in his brief Advertisement to the whole work he acknowledges that in the minute kind of history, so constantly requisite in biographical writing, the succession of facts is not easily discovered, and that "longer premeditation" might have added to his materials, while in the lives of later writers he might by attention and inquiry have gleaned many particulars which would have diversified and enlivened his work. "To adjust the minute events of literary history is," he tells us in his 'Life of Dryden,' "tedious and troublesome; it requires indeed no great force of understanding, but often depends upon inquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand." He reverts to the same subject and to other attendant difficulties in the first written of the second series of his Lives—that of Addison: "The necessity of complying with times, and of sparing persons,

is the great impediment of biography. History may be formed from permanent monuments and records; but Lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less, and in a short time is lost for ever. What is known can seldom be immediately told; and when it might be told, it is no longer known. The delicate features of the mind, the nice discriminations of character, and the minute peculiarities of conduct are soon obliterated; and it is surely better that caprice, obstinacy, frolic, and folly, however they might delight in the description, should be silently forgotten, than that, by wanton merriment and unseasonable detection, a pang should be given to a widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend. As the process of these narratives is now bringing me among my contemporaries, I begin to feel myself walking upon ashes under which the fire is not extinguished, and coming to the time of which it will be proper rather to say nothing that is false, than all that is true."

This was written late in life, long after he had put the case, as was his custom, in a somewhat different light. "If a life be delayed till interest and envy are at an end, we may hope for impartiality, but must expect little intelligence; for the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition. We know how few can portray a living acquaintance except by his most prominent and observable peculiarities, and the grosser features of his mind; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original. If the biographer writes from personal knowledge and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their detection; we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyric, and not to be known from one another but by extrinsic and casual circumstances. 'Let me

remember,' says Hale, 'when I find myself inclined to pity a criminal, that there is likewise a pity due to the country.' If we regard the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth."[4]

Where Johnson does not cite his authorities in foot-notes, he leaves the reader to infer that he has obtained his information from accessible materials. Yet — and mark his incessant love of truth—where he introduces new matter, he is particularly careful to name the persons from whom he derived it. Thus we find him citing his father, an old bookseller, in illustration of the sale of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' and the characteristic story he has given of the preaching of Burnet and Sprat. His friends in early life are frequently appealed to. From Walmsley (most enduringly remembered in these Lives) he derives a story about Rag Smith and Addison. Andrew Corbet of Shropshire is his authority for the anecdote of Addison and the barring out. Mr. Ing and "the well-known Ford" (Hogarth's Ford) are cited in support of passages in his Life of Broome. Mr. Locker of the Leather-sellers' Company, and Mr. Clark of Lincoln's Inn, are two more authorities to whom he refers, and of whom I have learnt nothing. I would that Boswell had known them! Dr. Madden —"a name which Ireland ought to honour"— is produced thrice as his authority in his Lives of Addison and Swift. Dr. Hawkesworth he acknowledges as his authority for an anecdote of modest Foster (no common man). He draws at times on booksellers of name in support of what he states. Thus we find him referring to Mr. Draper,—to Osborne, whom he knocked down, and in two or three places to Mr. Dodsley. Persons of still greater reputation occasionally occur. What Lord Orrery told him of Swift he has introduced into Swift's Life; and what Lord Marchmont, Bishop Warburton, Richardson the painter, and Dobson the scholar, told him about Pope, he has given on their authority. "Miller, the great gardener," "the late learned Mr. Dyer," Dr. Gregory, Mr. Thyer, Mr. Hampton (the translator of Polybius), and Mrs. Porter the actress, are

[4] 'Rambler,' No. 60.

cited by name; and his own wife, Miss Boothby, and Mrs. Piozzi are referred to, though unnamed, in other places. But his greatest obligation was to Savage, to whose information, afforded nearly forty years before these exquisite Lives were undertaken, he makes valuable and (to the credit of Savage's truthfulness) frequent reference.

In thus appealing to his authorities, he no doubt kept in view the caution he had addressed to Warton and others many years before, on the danger and weakness of trusting too readily to information. "Nothing," he says, "but experience could evince the frequency of false information, or enable any man to conceive that so many groundless reports should be propagated as every man of eminence may hear of himself. Some men relate what they think as what they know; some men of confused memories and habitual inaccuracy ascribe to one man what belongs to another; and some talk on without thought or care. A few men are sufficient to broach falsehoods, which are afterwards innocently diffused by successive relaters." [5]

He has been accused of giving too much importance to the attacks of Tom Brown and the criticisms of Dennis, but most improperly so. True it is that Dryden and Pope have outlived their antagonists, but both Brown and Dennis exercised an important influence on the reputations of the writers they attacked. Let us not be too severe:—

> "Ev'n such small critics some regard may claim,
> Preserved in Milton's or in Shakespeare's name."
>
> POPE: *Epistle to Arbuthnot.*

Brown and Dennis, both able men, will now live chiefly through the great poets they attacked and the proper importance which Johnson gave to their writings from his knowledge of the influence such satire and criticism exercised on the age in which he himself chose to be (and was) a poet. When writing the Lives of Wordsworth and Keats, we must not forget the injurious criticisms of the 'Edinburgh,' or the bitter notice of the 'Quarterly.' The next generation will no doubt wonder in what way poetic reputations could have been injured by such

[5] Review of Warton's Essay on Pope.

criticisms, as we ourselves wonder in what way Dryden could have been hurt by Brown's light shafts or Milbourne's heavy artillery, or Pope's reputation (high as it was) injured, even for a season, by the sullen asperities of Dennis.

Though his great undertaking was unforeseen, and not of his seeking, Johnson was not unprepared for it. He had been an author of high reputation for forty years, and Cowley, the earliest poet of whom he undertook to treat, had died within less than half a century of his own birth. One of the dreams of his youth had been a 'Life of Dryden,' and we casually learn that (with this very view) he sought for information about him from Cibber, whose means of information had indeed been great. His first poem ('London') was admired by Pope, who dragged it out from a mass of anonymous poems by the dunces of the day, and foresaw (if I may use his own expression[6]) the greatness of his young admirer.

Johnson considered the Life of Cowley as the best of the series: on account, says Boswell, of the dissertation it contains on the Metaphysical Poets, and the careful discrimination to be found in it of the characteristics of Wit. Yet few will agree with him in his preference, and we may perhaps trace his partiality to another cause. It was the first written of the series, and cost more trouble than any of the others—for he had to turn to books, and read not only Cowley, Donne, and Cleveland, but to elucidate his metaphysical extracts with a commentary on what, when he began, he knew but imperfectly; whereas in his Lives of Dryden and Pope he was writing from memory and from materials immediately within reach. His noble panegyric on 'Paradise Lost' might have been pronounced at Sir Joshua's table, and his famous parallel between Dryden and Pope was, it is easy to see, and as his MS. shows us, written at a heat.

As a piece of English composition there is no better life of Milton than Johnson's brief and admirable narrative; Todd is more full and accurate, and Brydges more enthusiastic and impartial, but the former is cumbrous and unmethodical, the latter

[6] 'Life of Pope.' He applies it to Dryden.

pleasant but superficial. Johnson (he had no predecessor of name) has not been outstripped.

Passing over the political objections to the life—for mankind (I fear) will long differ and dispute about the political character of Milton—I would venture to affirm that no one has written finer or truer things about 'Paradise Lost' than Johnson in this Life. His alleged virulence is indeed always more in the manner of his matter than the matter itself. He had no inclination to narrate the events of Milton's career; and tells us in the very outset of the memoir, that he would have contented himself with the addition of a few notes to Fenton's elegant Abridgment, but that a new narrative, for uniformity's sake, was thought necessary. What was forced upon him he at least performed with sincerity; and the hold that his memoir has had upon mankind may be best illustrated by a passage in Lord Byron:—

> "Milton 's the prince of poets,—so we say,
> A little heavy, but no less divine:
> An independent being in his day—
> Learn'd, pious, temperate in love and wine:
> But his life falling into Johnson's way,
> We 're told this great high-priest of all the Nine
> Was whipt at college—a harsh sire, odd spouse,
> For the first Mrs. Milton left his house."

That Milton suffered the indignity of corporal correction at college is now, among those that read, pretty generally exploded; but it will be long before the impression is thoroughly rooted out, advanced as it is by Johnson, and countenanced by Byron in a poem like 'Don Juan.' That Shakespeare stole deer, and that Milton was whipt at college, will long continue (I fear) among the vulgar errors of our literature.

The Life of Addison was the first of the second series of his prefaces, and contains some of his happiest characteristics. Disliking Addison for his politics, he loved him for his humour, his exquisite English, and the moral tendency of his pages.

There is little to correct in Johnson's Life of Swift, and research since he wrote has rather added to our information, than called in question the statements he put forth.

The cause of Johnson's supposed personal dislike to Swift has not been ascertained. Boswell, admitting the bias, is at a loss to account for it. But the reason was probably simple. The best of men are beset with prejudices, and Johnson had at least his full share. He remembered a kindness, more especially one in early life (witness his partiality for Warburton), and forgave but did not forget a neglect. When young, and known (at least among authors) as the writer of a vigorous satire, he was offered the mastership of a charity school, "provided he could obtain the degree of Master of Arts," without which, by the statutes of the school, he was inadmissible. The salary was sixty pounds a-year, and Lord Gower interested himself by letter to obtain through Swift the required diploma. Swift, it is supposed, withheld his recommendation, for Johnson, to whom the place was of the utmost consequence, failed in obtaining it. In other words, Swift refused or neglected him, when a kind word would have been a real charity to the rarest merit.

With less probability, other reasons are assigned: "he seemed to me," writes Boswell, "to have an unaccountable prejudice against Swift; for I once took the liberty to ask him if Swift had personally offended him, and he told me he had not." He was certainly, as Scott says, no friend to the fame of Swift.[7]

I am thus particular in referring to Johnson's 'Life of Swift,' clouded as it is with an air of constrained indifference, free as it is from his wonted assumption of superiority. There is throughout an evident struggle against a hatred burning within him; and when his pen is becoming bitter, he seems glad to escape, and to borrow a description from mild Dr. Delany. How otherwise did the filth of Swift's writings pass without Johnson's chastisement — without those reflections which the names of Stella, Varina, and Vanessa could not fail to awaken in a mind so well principled as his?

The Life of Savage was written when Johnson was a young man, and from the interest of its story, and the admirable manner in which that story is told, is deservedly looked upon

[7] Misc. Works, ed. 1834, vol. ii. p. 441.

as one of the best biographies in the English language. It is, however, unduly proportioned, when contrasted with the series of Lives into which it was somewhat violently introduced, for the merits of Savage as a poet can give him but a very slender claim to so lengthened a biography. But the life was originally written as a tale accompanied by a moral, and with no view whatever to a series of Lives. It would indeed be difficult in that sense to tell the story of Savage in fewer words than Johnson; and this he seems himself to have felt, for the Life as printed among the Poets differs from the first edition only in the alteration of an almost unimportant passage, and in the omission of certain extracts, meant at first for filling. It was a work of necessity and love. "I wrote," he observed in after life, "forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the Life of Savage at a sitting; but then I sat up all night." Had he continued at this speed, he would have written the whole Life at four sittings, for the original edition, to which he referred, is contained in one hundred and eighty pages.

The 'Life of Pope,' for the facts it contains—facts first found in Johnson—is certainly the most important of the Lives. It is indeed a noble specimen of biography—and I will add (in spite of some few words), of English. That I have partly formed my opinion from Mr. Croker (whose knowledge of Pope is undoubted) will I am sure in no way detract from the value of my judgment in this particular.

When Boswell, in conversation with Burke, characterised the 'Life of Young' as a work possessing a considerable share of merit, and displaying a pretty successful imitation of Johnson's style, Burke vehemently opposed him. "No, no," he exclaimed, "it is not a good imitation of Johnson; it has all his pomp, without his force; it has all the nodosities of the oak, without its strength; it has all the contortions of the sibyl, without the inspiration." As if he had no sense of the sarcastic criticism of Burke, Croft bound up his copy of the Lives (which I have seen) with this lettering, "Johnson's Beauties and Deformities;" his own part of the book exhibiting the deformities of Johnson rather exaggerated than improved. Even in his few good

passages, Croft is at an immeasurable distance from the writer he imitates. No one acquainted with Johnson has found occasion to believe, while reading the 'Life of Young,' that the narration before him was the work of the author of the other Lives, or to wish, as Johnson suggests, that he had solicited and obtained more such favours from his friend.

"In the 'Life of Lyttelton,' Johnson seems to have been not favourably disposed towards that nobleman." Such is the observation of Boswell, such was the opinion of the friends of Lord Lyttelton, and such is the result at which every reader of the Life arrives. It is indeed a sketch reluctantly and hastily put together—reluctantly, because he was willing to have adopted a life by any friendly hand, and hastily, because he wrote it from few materials, and at the last moment. His letters to Lord Westcote, the brother of Lord Lyttelton, exhibit his desire to obtain a life with as little trouble to himself as possible:—

"To Lord Westcote.

"My Lord, "Bolt Court, Fleet Street, July 27, 1780.

"The course of my undertaking will now require a short life of your brother, Lord Lyttelton. My desire is to avoid offence, and to be totally out of danger. I take the liberty of proposing to your Lordship that the historical account should be written under your direction by any friend you may be willing to employ, and I will only take upon myself to examine the poetry. Four pages like those of his work, or even half so much, will be sufficient. As the press is going on, it will be fit that I should know what you shall be pleased to determine.—I am, &c.

"Sam. Johnson."

"To Lord Westcote.

"My Lord, "Bolt Court, Fleet Street, July 28, 1780.

"I wish it had been convenient to have had that done which I proposed. I shall certainly not wantonly nor willingly offend; but when there are such near relations living, I had rather they would please themselves. In the Life of Lord Lyttelton I shall need no help—it was very public, and I have no need to be minute. But I return your Lordship thanks for your readiness to help me. I have another life in hand, that of Mr. West, about which I am quite at a loss; any information about him would be of great use to "My Lord, yours, &c.

"Sam. Johnson."

What he thought of Lord Westcote's refusal he described at the time in a letter to Mrs. Thrale:—"I sent to Lord Westcote about his brother's Life; but he says he knows not whom to employ, and is sure I shall do him no injury. There is an ingenious scheme to save a day's work, or part of a day, utterly defeated. Then what avails it to be wise? The plain and the artful man must both do their own work. But I think I have got a Life of Dr. Young." [8]

Failing in his endeavours to obtain a Life, he went to his task sullenly, and "poor Lyttelton," as he has called him, suffered by the failure of the "ingenious scheme." Mrs. Montagu exhibited her displeasure at her own table and before Johnson. Mr. Pepys in the library at Streatham made battle with the biographer in defence of his deceased friend. Johnson did not give way—he took credit to himself for concealing what he called the coarseness of Lord Lyttelton's manners, and an anecdote as he told Hawkins in its nature very ridiculous. Johnson was occasionally himself the "good hater" he liked—he was not favourably disposed towards Lyttelton—and his early dislike coloured the whole of his biography; for notwithstanding his many virtues and great goodness of heart, his resentment too frequently subsided with a lasting sediment. The occasion of his dislike to Lyttelton is unknown—for Mrs. Piozzi's supposition that it rose from rivalry for the heart of Miss Boothby is too absurd even for fiction. If I may be allowed a conjecture, I would suggest that Johnson's dislike may be traced to the neglect which he met with from Lyttelton—for he had known him slightly, and Lyttelton during Johnson's years of struggle (1738-1752) was the professed patron of poets and literary men.

The last of the 'Lives' in the order of composition was that of Gray. That his criticism is now and then captious, and not unfrequently unfounded, is, I think, very generally allowed. He admired the Elegy, he respected Gray's learning, and he loved his virtuous life; yet he had little sympathy with him after all. They were contemporaries who never met. Gray

[8] 'Boswell,' by Croker, Ed. 1847, p. 650.

lived with Mason and Walpole, Johnson with Hawkesworth and Goldsmith. Gray's little coterie (Gray himself excepted) depreciated Johnson and his little senate of admirers; and Goldsmith, the most eminent of Johnson's little club (Johnson himself excepted), suffered his usual good taste to be so far overcome by prejudice that he is found to prefer—and in print moreover—the Night Piece of Parnell to the Elegy of Gray. But Johnson did not share his friend's mistaken preference, and has said so in his 'Life.' The tone of his criticism in this last of his 'Lives' must be referred to the same cause which led him to laugh at Warton's poetry, and to foretell (falsely enough) that Hoole's translation of Tasso would supplant the earlier and nobler version of Fairfax.

Johnson's Life of Gray is a disparaging performance, the work of a superior mind anxious to cavil and find fault: its depreciatory tone has, however, been far from catching, and Gray has had ample justice done him in the general admiration of the world.

But Johnson was at least consistent in his dislike of the poetry of Gray. His contempt for his Odes was a frequent subject of conversation with him, and some of his severest sayings were remembered by Boswell, by Piozzi, and by Langton. Indeed he who was blind to the beauties of 'Lycidas' was sure to indulge in cold and contemptuous language about the lyrical effusions of the fanciful Gray. Even his friendship for Collins could not extort any great approbation of his Odes. Johnson loved Collins, but he had no sympathy with his poetry: and his observations on Gray are in keeping with the tone of all his criticism throughout the 'Lives of the Poets.'

"Between the extremes," says Dryden, "of admiration and of malice it is hard to judge uprightly of the living. Friendship and hatred alike blind us in deciding upon the merits of our contemporaries; we are either bribed by interest or prejudiced by malice. A large portion of ill-nature, guided by a small quantity of judgment, will go far in finding the mistakes and inelegancies of writers."

It is easy to see in what Johnson thought good poetry to

consist. He appears to have admired Dryden as much as he could admire any author. He rather sees than appreciates the sublime beauties of Milton. Tickell's 'Elegy on Addison' he silently prefers to Milton's 'Lycidas.' He does not delight in fiction or in blank verse, but likes sterling sense expressed in vigorous English, and in English hexameters with rhyme Poetry, in his eyes, was not poetry as it appeared to Gray—

"Truth severe in fairy Fiction drest"—

but was valuable chiefly for the quantity it contained of solid reasoning. When he fails to convince us, he always leaves us with a favourable opinion of his good sense; for even when wrong, he is still sagacious and penetrating, and the reader never loses the presence of a clear intellect. Wherever the world has dissented from his judgments, the world is still curious to preserve his opinions; and where understanding alone is sufficient for poetical criticism, the decisions of Johnson are generally right. Indeed, the judgment of the world is that of Byron. "Johnson," writes the noble poet, "strips many a leaf from every laurel; still Johnson's is the finest critical work extant, and can never be read without instruction and delight."

It has been often said, but by no writer more strongly than by Ben Jonson, to whom his great namesake bore so many resemblances, that to judge of poets is not the faculty of all poets, but only of the best of poets. Nor is Johnson to be rejected even by this test; he has a right to be heard on a poetical question, for he is most assuredly a poet. His 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' his 'Prologue for Garrick,' and his 'Lines on Levett,' would do honour to any name in our literature. He gives (I feel and regret) a most undue preference to blank verse over rhyme, and is too uncompromising an advocate for the school of Dryden and Pope; yet when his principles are understood, it is easy to read him without falling into his errors. When Lord Chesterfield was told during his Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland that his coachman was a Roman Catholic, and went every Sunday to mass, "Does he indeed?" replied his Lord-

ship; "I will take good care that he shall never drive me there." The characteristic rejoinder of the witty nobleman deserves to be remembered on other occasions than where servants are concerned.

The style of Johnson in his 'Lives' is freer from inflation and sesquipedalian terms than the other works of their writer. His sentences are seldom long; they are close, forcible, and sounding. His manner is his own; as he spoke he wrote, for just conceptions are seldom without the very words required to give them utterance. The style throughout is peculiarly good Johnsonian, modulated to a march never monotonous. It is free from the strut of Robertson or the pomp of Gibbon, is familiar without grossness, dignified without ostentation, and easy without labour.

He wrote with great facility, and from the nearness of his vision in a manner almost peculiar to himself. It was his habit to form each sentence in his mind before committing any portion of it to paper. "Of composition," he says, "there are different methods. Some employ at once memory and invention, and with little intermediate use of the pen form and polish large masses by continued meditation, and write their productions only, when in their own opinion they have completed them."[9] His style attained in this way that certain roll and balance so characteristic of him. The original MS. of his 'Life of Pope' (now in Mr. Dillon's possession) fully confirms the statement of his biographer. The corrections are very few in number, and yet from the proof sheets of the work quoted by Boswell (the originals of which are now in Mr. Daniel's keeping) it is clear that he was a pains-taking corrector of his own writings, weighing the full meaning of every word, and altering with a precision that supplies a useful lesson to the most experienced.

Curiosity is always alive to learn what prices were received by writers for works that reflect credit on our literature. Johnson's original agreement for the Lives was two hundred guineas; and for this sum he was to part with the entire copyright. The success of the work, and Johnson's enlargement

[9] 'Life of Pope.'

of the design, induced the booksellers to add one hundred guineas more, and after a brief interval a second one hundred guineas, so that the sum he received was four hundred guineas. "I always said," he observed to Nichols, "that the booksellers were a generous set of men. Nor, in the present instance, have I reason to complain. The fact is, not that they have paid me too little, but that I have written too much." In this payment the 'Life of Savage' is not included: this was an early work, for which he received fifteen guineas.

In the present edition I have sought to substantiate doubtful information and to correct what is wrong in matters of fact, leaving points of taste as much as possible to the reader's own good judgment to receive or to reject. In particular passages, however, I have at times allowed some authors of undoubted reputation to combat an opinion in a note, while I have invariably sought to give any new facts of moment which the industry of others may have brought to light, or my own inquiries have enabled me to elicit. The quotations I have collated with care: some were corrupt from the first, and others had become so from the habit of reprinting not from the last edition which passed under the author's own eye, but from the last in order of publication.[10] In short, I have, I believe, treated the book as a friend to whom I had many obligations, and whose injunction, "be kind to my remains," it was a duty to fulfil.

Johnson was not over-fond of dates—I have therefore silently corrected many of his errors, and added to the text [in square brackets] other dates, likely to prove of use to the reader.

Of the new information to be found in this edition, procured by my own industry alone, I hope to say something before the third and last volume. In the mean time I may be permitted to relate an anecdote connected with literature and with this book. When my father was a common stone-mason in the town in which Robert Burns died, he made his way on foot to

[10] Let me give two instances in an extract from one of Cowley's letters. "All people upon the place incline to that *of union*;" so says Johnson: but Cowley wrote *opinion*. "Virgil has *told the same thing* to that purpose;" so says Johnson: but Cowley wrote *told me something*.

Edinburgh, foreseeing a better outlet for his genius than his native place was likely to afford. With the characteristic prudence of his countrymen he carried money with him. His hunger and his thirst were both for books. When his labours of the day were over (he wrought in Edinburgh as a mason) he would repair to a sale-room kept by old Blackwood (afterwards eminent as a publisher), where books were sold at night by cheaper advances in price than those now in use. For three shillings and eleven pence he bought Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets' in four volumes, then comparatively a dear book. As he was carrying off his purchase he was accosted by a gentleman who, arriving too late for the sale, offered a handsome per centage to the mason for the acquisition he was carrying delighted away. The offer was politely refused, much, as I have heard my father relate, to the surprise of the gentleman, who looked at his mason's apron and his purchase with mixed and increasing surprise. From this acquisition (gained by the sweat of the brow, in later years honoured with a better binding) my father learned much, and I have learned something. The reader who delights in biography and has any liking for the notes that follow will excuse this anecdote. To my father's cheap but highly-prized acquisition the public is mainly indebted for a good work (the Lives of the British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects), and in that edition I first read Johnson, and determined twenty years ago to become his editor.

PETER CUNNINGHAM.

Kensington, Sept. 21, 1854.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Booksellers having determined to publish a body of English Poetry, I was persuaded to promise them a Preface to the Works of each Author; an undertaking, as it was then presented to my mind, not very extensive[1] or difficult.

My purpose was only to have allotted to every Poet an Advertisement, like those which we find in the French Miscellanies, containing a few dates and a general character; but I have been led beyond my intention, I hope by the honest desire of giving useful pleasure.

In this minute kind of History, the succession of facts is not easily discovered; and I am not without suspicion that some of Dryden's works are placed in wrong years. I have followed Langbaine, as the best authority for his plays, and, if I shall hereafter obtain a more correct chronology, will publish it; but I do not yet know that my account is erroneous.[2]

Dryden's Remarks on Rymer have been somewhere[3] printed before. The former edition I have not seen. This was transcribed for the press from his own manuscript.[4]

As this undertaking was occasional and unforeseen, I must be supposed to have engaged in it with less provision of mate-

[1] *Originally* tedious.

[2] The dates assigned to Dryden's Plays by Johnson are corrected in this Edition from Dryden's own list of his plays and from the first editions, &c.

[3] In 1711 prefixed to an octavo edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, and since included in Malone's edition of his Prose Works, and Scott's edition of his Works. Its place therefore, in this edition of the Lives, I have thought proper to supply by two characteristic letters of Dryden's discovered since Scott's edition, and consequently not included in any edition of Dryden's Works.

[4] From the original, then in Garrick's possession.

rials than might have been accumulated by longer premeditation. Of the later writers at least I might, by attention and inquiry, have gleaned many particulars, which would have diversified and enlivened my Biography. These omissions, which it is now useless to lament, have been often supplied by the kindness of Mr. Steevens and others; and great assistance has been given me by Mr. Spence's Collections,[5] of which I consider the communication as a favour worthy of public acknowledgment.[6]

[5] The quotations from Spence's MSS. in this edition of the Lives I have corrected by Mr. Singer's Edition of Spence, 1 vol. 8vo., 1820.

[6] The first Advertisement, dated March 15, 1779, contains this additional paragraph:

"I had been told that in the College of Physicians there is some memorial of Dryden's funeral, but my intelligence was not true; the story, therefore, wants the credit which such a testimony would have given it. There is in Farquhar's Letters an indistinct mention of it as irregular and disorderly, and of the oration which was then spoke. More than this I have not discovered."

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THE

LIVES OF THE ENGLISH POETS.

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

COWLEY.

1618–1667.

Birth and Parentage — Genius — Educated at Westminster and Cambridge — His learned Puerilities — His 'Mistress'— His Compliance with the Times — His Latin Poetry — His 'Davideis' — His Love of Solitude — Death and Burial in Westminster Abbey — The Metaphysical Poets — Pindarism — Works and Character.

The Life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat,[1] an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely anything is distinctly known, but all is shown confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyric.

Abraham Cowley was born in the year 1618. His father was a grocer, whose condition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen; and, what would probably not have been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dunstan's parish gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary.[2] Whoever he was, he died before the

[1] In 1668 in Latin, before a collection of Cowley's Latin Poems, afterwards in English, and enlarged before his English Works, 1669, folio.

[2] Johnson's account of Cowley's parentage is entirely erroneous. It is, however, still the received account, and is derived principally from Aubrey. Abraham Cowley was the posthumous son of Thomas Cowley, citizen and stationer, and of the parish of St. Michael at Querne, a church in Cheapside, destroyed in the Great Fire, and not rebuilt. His father died in August, 1618, and by will, dated 24th July in that year, left 140*l.* apiece to his six children, Peter, Andrew, John, William, Katherine, and Thomas, "and the child or children which my wife now goeth withal." He leaves his wife his full and

birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of his mother, whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's 'Fairy Queen,' in which he very early took delight to read, till, by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a poet. Such are the accidents which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called genius. The true genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great painter of the present age, had the first fondness for his art excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.[3]

By his mother's solicitation he was admitted into Westminster School, where he was soon distinguished. "He was wont," says Sprat, "to relate that he had this defect in his memory at that time, that his teachers never could bring it to retain the ordinary rules of grammar."

This is an instance of the natural desire of man to propagate a wonder. It is surely very difficult to tell anything as it was heard, when Sprat could not refrain from amplifying a commodious incident, though the book to which he prefixed his narrative contained its confutation. A memory admitting some things and rejecting others, an intellectual digestion that con-

sole executrix. Those who remember Cowley's exquisite 'Chronicle' will be glad to learn that his mother's Christian name was "Thomasine," and that of his only sister "Katherine."

[3] After his oracle Dr. Johnson, my friend Sir Joshua Reynolds denies all original genius, any one natural propensity of the mind to one art or science rather than another. Without engaging in a metaphysical or rather verbal dispute, I *know* by experience that from my early youth I aspired to the character of an historian.—GIBBON: *Autobiography, ed. Milman*, p. 154.

cocted the pulp of learning, but refused the husks, had the appearance of an instinctive elegance, of a particular provision made by nature for literary politeness. But in the author's own honest relation the marvel vanishes: "He was," he says, "such an enemy to all constraint, that his master never could prevail on him to learn the rules without book." He does not tell that he could not learn the rules, but that, being able to perform his exercises without them, and being an "enemy to constraint," he spared himself the labour.[4]

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope might be said "to lisp in numbers;" and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to more tardy minds seems scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written but printed in his thirteenth year,[5] containing, with other poetical compositions, 'The Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe,' written when he was ten years old; and 'Constantia and Philetus,' written two years after.[6]

While he was yet at school he produced a comedy called 'Love's Riddle,' though it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge.[7] This comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority.

[4] When I was a very young boy at school, instead of running about on holidays and playing with my fellows, I was wont to steal from them and walk into the fields, either alone with a book, or with some one companion, if I could find any of the same temper. I was then, too, so much an enemy to all constraint, that my masters could never prevail on me to learn without book the common rules of grammar, in which they dispensed with me alone, because they found I made a shift to do the usual exercise out of my own reading and observation.—Cowley: '*Of Myself*,' Essay xi.

[5] Printed 1633, in his *fifteenth* year. Dedicated to Williams, Bishop of Lincoln and Dean of Westminster. Johnson was misled by Sprat and by the portrait of Cowley at the age of 13, prefixed to the volume entitled Poetical Blossomes by A. C. London, 1633, small 4to. pp. 61. In the portrait he is represented as about to be crowned with laurel.

[6] Preface to Poetical Blossomes, small 4to., 1633.

[7] Love's Riddle, a Pastorall Comedie, written at the time of his being King's scholler in Westminster Schoole, by A. Cowley. London, 12mo., 1638.

In 1636 he was removed to Cambridge,[8] where he continued his studies with great intenseness; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his 'Davideis'—a work of which the materials could not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.[9]

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published 'Love's Riddle,' with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby, of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious, and 'Naufragium Joculare,' a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models; for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed, with a dedication in verse to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but having neither the facility of a popular nor the accuracy of a learned work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the Prince[10] passed through Cambridge in his way to York, he was entertained with a representation of the 'Guardian,' a comedy, which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but rough-drawn by him, and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country,[11] he appears to have considered as injurious to his reputation; though, during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now Master of Arts, he was, by the prevalence of the Parliament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford, where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire, called 'The Puritan and the Papist,' which was only inserted in the last collection of his works,[12] and so

[8] He was a candidate this year at Westminster School for election to Trinity College, but proved unsuccessful.

[9] I have often heard you [Martin Clifford] declare that he had finished the greatest part of it [the Davideis] while he was yet a young student at Cambridge.—SPRAT: *Life of Cowley.*

[10] Afterwards Charles II.

[11] It was printed in 4to., 1650, and without his consent or even knowledge.

[12] The Puritan and the Papist was added to Cowley's Works in the collection which bears Dr. Johnson's name.

distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty, and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the King, and amongst others of Lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

About the time when Oxford was surrendered to the Parliament, he followed the Queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the Lord Jermyn, afterwards Earl of St. Alban's, and was employed in such correspondence as the royal cause required, and particularly in ciphering and deciphering the letters that passed between the King and Queen—an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that, for several years, it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647 his 'Mistress' was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a subsequent edition, that "poets are scarce thought freemen of their company without paying some duties, or obliging themselves to be true to love."

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth: he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes,[13] who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion.

This consideration cannot but abate, in some measure, the reader's esteem for the work and the author. To love excellence is natural; it is natural likewise for the lover to solicit reciprocal regard by an elaborate display of his own qualifications. The desire of pleasing has in different men produced actions of heroism, and effusions of wit; but it seems as reasonable to appear the champion as the poet of an "airy no-

[13] Barnesii Anacreontem.—JOHNSON. Cambridge, 12mo., 1705.

thing," and to quarrel as to write for what Cowley might have learned from his master Pindar to call, the "dream of a shadow."

It is surely not difficult, in the solitude of a college, or in the bustle of the world, to find useful studies and serious employment. No man needs to be so burthened with life as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences. The man that sits down to suppose himself charged with treason or peculation, and heats his mind to an elaborate purgation of his character from crimes which he was never within the possibility of committing, differs only by the infrequency of his folly from him who praises beauty which he never saw, complains of jealousy which he never felt, supposes himself sometimes invited and sometimes forsaken, fatigues his fancy and ransacks his memory for images which may exhibit the gaiety of hope or the gloominess of despair, and dresses his imaginary Chloris or Phyllis sometimes in flowers fading as her beauty, and sometimes in gems lasting as her virtues.

At Paris, as secretary to Lord Jermyn, he was engaged in transacting things of real importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, from April to December in 1650, are preserved in 'Miscellanea Aulica,' a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters, being written like those of other men whose minds are more on things than words, contribute no otherwise to his reputation than as they show him to have been above the affectation of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetoric.

One passage, however, seems not unworthy of some notice. Speaking of the Scotch treaty then in agitation:—

"The Scotch treaty," says he, "is the only thing now in which we are vitally concerned; I am one of the last hopers, and yet cannot now abstain from believing, that the agreement will be made: all people upon the place incline to that opinion. The Scotch will moderate somewhat of the rigour of their de-

mands; the mutual necessity of an accord is visible, the King is persuaded of it, and all mankind, but two or three mighty tender consciences about him. And to tell you the truth (which I take to be an argument above all the rest), Virgil has told me something to that purpose."

This expression from a secretary of the present time would be considered as merely ludicrous, or at most as an ostentatious display of scholarship; but the manners of that time were so tinged with superstition, that I cannot but suspect Cowley of having consulted on this great occasion the Virgilian lots, and to have given some credit to the answer of his oracle.[14]

Some years afterwards, "business," says Sprat, "passed of course into other hands;" and Cowley, being no longer useful

[14] Wee proceeded to mention the King's [Charles I.] readinesse in foretelling events, and from this to his Sors Virgiliana, which hapned at Oxford in the time of the late war, and whilst the parliament sate there, viz. that his majesty being tired out with businesse and afflictions, resolv'd to recreate himselfe with some young noblemen who were students there, by pricking in Virgil for his fortune, which he did, and lighted upon Dido's curse to Æneas when hee left her.

> At bello audacis populi vexatus et armis,
> Finibus extorris, complexu avulsus Iuli,
> Auxilium imploret, videatque indigna suorum
> Funera; nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquæ
> Tradiderit, regno aut optatâ luce fruatur:
> Sed cadat ante diem, mediâque inhumatus arenâ.
>
> *Æneid, IV.* 615-620.

Whereat his majesty seem'd much concern'd, but sent it by Mr. Jermyn, now Earl of St. Alban's, to Mr. Cowley, then student of Christchurch, to translate them into English, with a command not to acquaint him whose sors it was, which Mr. Cowley did thus:

> By a bold people's stubborn arms opprest,
> Forc'd to forsake the land which he possest,
> Torn from his dearest son, let him in vain
> Seek help, and see his friends unjustly slain:
> Let him to bold unequal terms submit,
> In hopes to save his crown, yet lose both it
> And life at once; untimely let him die,
> And on an open stage unburied lie.
>
> *Diary of Dr. Edward Lake, under 29th Jan.* 1677-8.

'The known story' of Mr. Cowley and the Sortes Virgilianæ is alluded to by Dr. Knightly Chetwood, in his 'Life of Virgil,' prefixed to Dryden's translation, and commonly (but erroneously) attributed to Walsh.

at Paris, was in 1656 sent back into England, that, "under pretence of privacy and retirement, he might take occasion of giving notice of the posture of things in this nation."

Soon after his return to London, he was seized by some messengers of the usurping powers, who were sent out in quest of another man; and, being examined, was put into confinement, from which he was not dismissed without the security of a thousand pounds given by Dr. Scarborough.[15]

This year [1656] he published his Poems, with a preface, in which he seems to have inserted something, suppressed in subsequent editions, which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty.[16] In this preface he declares, that "his desire had been for some years past, and did still vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this world for ever."

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him, and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled: a man harassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights in ciphering and deciphering, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet and of safety. Yet let

[15] To Dr. Scarborough one of Cowley's Pindaric Odes is addressed. He is said to have written a poem on Cowley's death.

[16] This suppressed *something* (as Johnson calls it) is nearly a folio page of the Preface to his Poems, 1656, and has not been reproduced in any edition of Cowley, or seen, as I suspect, by any of his biographers since Sprat. He gives in to the times, and is content to live under the existing government. It is ridiculous, he says, to make laurels for the conquered when the event of battle and the unaccountable will of God has determined the controversy. The war of the pen ceased with the war of the sword. He desires, "like Themistocles," the art of oblivion, and would have it accounted no less unlawful to rip up old wounds than to give new ones. It is this, he says, that has made him not only abstain from printing anything of this kind, but to burn the very copies, and inflict a severer punishment on them himself than perhaps he tells us the most rigid officer of state would have thought that they deserved. Three books of the Civil War, reaching as far as the first battle of Newbury, perished thus voluntarily on the part of the complying Cowley. At Newbury Lord Falkland fell.

neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.[17]

He then took upon himself the character of physician, still, according to Sprat, with intention "to dissemble the main design of his coming over;" and, as Mr. Wood relates, "complying with some of the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created doctor of physic, which being done to his mind (whereby he gained the ill-will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver's death."

This is no favourable representation, yet even in this not much wrong can be discovered. How far he complied with the men in power is to be inquired before he can be blamed. It is not said that he told them any secrets, or assisted them by intelligence, or any other act. If he only promised to be quiet, that they in whose hands he was might free him from confinement, he did what no law of society prohibits.

The man whose miscarriage in a just cause has put him in the power of his enemy may, without any violation of his integrity, regain his liberty or preserve his life by a promise of neutrality: for the stipulation gives the enemy nothing which he had not before; the neutrality of a captive may be always secured by his imprisonment or death. He that is at the disposal of another may not promise to aid him in any injurious act, because no power can compel active obedience. He may engage to do nothing, but not to do ill.

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled; nor that it made him think himself secure, for at that dissolution of government which followed the death of Oliver he returned into France, where he resumed his former station, and stayed till the Restoration.

"He continued," says his biographer, "under these bonds

[17] Whoever wishes to see Johnson's enlarged and earlier comment on this printed desire of Cowley's may see it in the Rambler, No. 6.

till the general deliverance:"[18] it is therefore to be supposed that he did not go to France and act again for the King without the consent of his bondsman; that he did not show his loyalty at the hazard of his friend, but by his friend's permission.

Of the verses on Oliver's death, in which Wood's narrative seems to imply something encomiastic, there has been no appearance. There is a discourse concerning his government, indeed, with verses intermixed, but such as certainly gained its author no friends among the abettors of usurpation.

A doctor of physic, however, he was made at Oxford, in December, 1657; and in the commencement of the Royal Society, of which an account has been given by Dr. Birch, he appears busy among the experimental philosophers with the title of Dr. Cowley.

There is no reason for supposing that he ever attempted practice; but his preparatory studies have contributed something to the honour of his country. Considering botany as necessary to a physician, he retired into Kent to gather plants; and, as the predominance of a favourite study affects all subordinate operations of the intellect, botany in the mind of Cowley turned into poetry. He composed in Latin several books on plants, of which the first and second display the qualities of herbs, in elegiac verse; the third and fourth, the beauties of flowers, in various measures; and the fifth and sixth, the uses of trees, in heroic numbers.

At the same time were produced, from the same university, two great poets, Cowley and Milton, of dissimilar genius, of opposite principles, but concurring in the cultivation of Latin poetry, in which the English, till their works and May's poem appeared,[19] seemed unable to contest the palm with any other of the lettered nations.

If the Latin performances of Cowley and Milton be compared (for May I hold to be superior to both), the advantage seems

[18] 'Redemption' is Sprat's word, but this was too strong a word for Johnson.

[19] 'Supplementum Lucani,' 1640. A continuation in Latin verse of Lucan's Pharsalia to the death of Julius Cæsar.

to lie on the side of Cowley.[20] Milton is generally content to express the thoughts of the ancients in their language; Cowley, without much loss of purity or elegance, accommodates the diction of Rome to his own conceptions.[21]

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a Song of Triumph. But this was a time of such general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed, and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised, by both Charles I. and II., the mastership of the Savoy; "but he lost it," says Wood, "by certain persons, enemies to the Muses."

The neglect of the Court was not his only mortification: having, by such alteration as he thought proper, fitted his old comedy of the 'Guardian' for the stage, he produced it [8th Dec. 1661] under the title of 'Cutter of Coleman-street.' It was treated on the stage with great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the King's party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to Mr. Dennis, "that, when they told Cowley how little favour had been shown him, he received the news of his ill success not with so much firmness as might have been expected from so great a man."[22]

[20] The Latin poetry of *Deliciæ Poetarum Scotorum* would have done honour to any nation: at least till the publication of May's *Supplement*, the English had very little to oppose.—JOHNSON: *Journey to the Western Islands.*

Dr. Johnson, unjustly I think, prefers the Latin poetry of May and Cowley to that of Milton, and thinks May to be the first of the three. May is certainly a sonorous versifier, and was sufficiently accomplished in poetical declamation for the continuation of Lucan's Pharsalia. But May is scarcely an author in point.—T. WARTON: *Preface to Milton's Minor Poems*, p. xviii., 2nd edit.

[21] But what are these conceptions? Metaphysical conceits, all the unnatural extravagances of his English poetry, such as will not bear to be clothed in the Latin language, much less are capable of admitting any degree of pure Latinity. —T. WARTON: *Preface to Milton's Minor Poems*, p. xviii., 2nd ed.

[22] 1661, December 16. After dinner to the Opera [the Duke's House, or D'Avenant's Theatre], where there was a new play (Cutter of Coleman-street)

What firmness they expected, or what weakness Cowley discovered, cannot be known. He that misses his end will never be as much pleased as he that attains it, even when he can impute no part of his failure to himself; and when the end is to please the multitude, no man, perhaps, has a right, in things admitting of gradation and comparison, to throw the whole blame upon his judges, and totally to exclude diffidence and shame by a haughty consciousness of his own excellence.

For the rejection of this play it is difficult now to find the reason: it certainly has, in a very great degree, the power of fixing attention and exciting merriment. From the charge of disaffection he exculpates himself in his preface, by observing how unlikely it is that, having followed the royal family through all their distresses, "he should choose the time of their restoration to begin a quarrel with them." It appears, however, from the Theatrical Register of Downes the prompter, to have been popularly considered as a satire on the royalists.[23]

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent in an ode called 'The Complaint,' in which he styles himself the *melancholy* Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity.

These unlucky incidents are brought, maliciously enough, together in some stanzas, written about that time, on the choice of a laureat; a mode of satire by which, since it was first introduced by Suckling, perhaps every generation of poets has been teased.

"Savoy-missing Cowley came into the court,
Making apologies for his bad play:
Every one gave him so good a report,
That Apollo gave heed to all he could say:

---

made in the year 1658, with reflections much upon the late times; and it being the first time, the pay was doubled, and so to save money my wife and I went into the gallery, and there sat and saw very well; and a very good play it is; it seems of Cowley's making.—PEPYS.

[23] This comedy being acted so perfectly well and exact, it was performed a whole week with a full audience. *Note.* This play was not a little injurious to the Cavalier indigent officers, especially the characters of Cutter and Worm. —DOWNES' *Roscius Anglicanus*, 12mo., 1708, p. 25.

Nor would he have had, 'tis thought, a rebuke,
Unless he had done some notable folly;
Writ verses unjustly in praise of Sam Tuke,[24]
Or printed his pitiful Melancholy."

His vehement desire of retirement now came again upon him. "Not finding," says the morose Wood, "that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey."

"He was now," says the courtly Sprat, "weary of the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was satiated with the arts of a court; which sort of life, though his virtue had made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. Those were the reasons that moved him to forego all public employments, and follow the violent inclination of his own mind, which, in the greatest throng of his former business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the true delights of solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and of a moderate revenue below the malice and flatteries of fortune."

So differently are things seen! and so differently are they shown! but actions are visible, though motives are secret. Cowley certainly retired; first to Barn-elms, and afterwards to Chertsey, in Surrey. He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the *hum of men*.[25] He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow tedious. His retreat was at first but slenderly accommodated; yet he soon obtained, by the interest of the Earl of St. Alban's and the Duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the Queen's lands as afforded him an ample income.[26]

[24] On Colonel Tuke's tragedy, 'The Adventures of Five Hours.'

[25] 'L'Allegro' of Milton.—JOHNSON.

[26] When Cowley grew sick of the court, he took a house first at Battersea, then at Barnes, and then at Chertsey, always farther and farther from town. In

By the lover of virtue and of wit it will be solicitously asked if he now was happy. Let them peruse one of his letters accidentally preserved by Peck,[27] which I recommend to the consideration of all that may hereafter pant for solitude.

"*To Dr. Thomas Sprat.*

"Chertsey, 21 May, 1665.

"The first night that I came hither I caught so great a cold, with a defluxion of rheum, as made me keep my chamber ten days; and, two after, had such a bruise on my ribs with a fall, that I am yet unable to move or turn myself in my bed. This is my personal fortune here to begin with. And, besides, I can get no money from my tenants, and have my meadows eaten up every night by cattle put in by my neighbours. What this signifies, or may come to in time, God knows; if it be ominous, it can end in nothing less than hanging. Another misfortune has been, and stranger than all the rest, that you have broke your word with me, and failed to come, even though you told Mr. Bois that you would. This is what they call *monstri simile.* I do hope to recover my late hurt so farre within five or six days (though it be uncertain yet whether I shall ever recover it) as to walk about again. And then, methinks, you and I and the Dean might be very merry upon St. Anne's Hill. You might very conveniently come hither the way of Hampton town, lying there one night. I write this in pain, and can say no more: *Verbum sapienti.*"[28]

the latter part of his life he showed a sort of aversion for women, and would leave the room when they came in: 'twas probably from a disappointment in love. He was much in love with his Leonora, who is mentioned at the end of that good ballad of his on his different mistresses. She was married to Dean Sprat's brother; and Cowley never was in love with anybody after.—Pope: *Spence by Singer,* p. 286.

[27] Appendix to 'Life of Cromwell,' p. 81.

[28] I thought when I went first to dwell in the country, that without doubt I should have met there with the simplicity of the old poetical age; I thought to have found no inhabitants there but such as the shepherds of Sir Philip Sidney in Arcadia, or of Monsieur d'Urfé upon the banks of Lignon; and

He did not long enjoy the pleasure or suffer the uneasiness of solitude, for he died at the Porch-house[29] in Chertsey in 1667,[30] in the 49th year of his age.[31]

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser;[32] and King Charles pronounced, "That Mr. Cowley had not left behind him a better man in England." He is represented by Dr. Sprat as the most amiable of mankind; and this posthumous praise may safely be credited, as it has never been contradicted by envy or by faction.

Such are the remarks and memorials which I have been able

began to consider with myself which way I might recommend no less to posterity the happiness and innocence of the men of Chertsey; but to confess the truth, I perceived quickly, by infallible demonstrations, that I was still in Old England, and not in Arcadia or La Forrest.—Cowley: *The Dangers of an Honest Man in much Company.* Johnson's 'Dick Shifter' ('The Idler,' No. 71) is an admirable carrying out of Cowley's desire by a Cockney smit with the charms of rural life as described by poets.

[29] Now [1779] in the possession of Mr. Clarke, alderman of London.—Johnson.

[30] 28th July, 1667.

[31] Cowley's allowance was at last not above three hundred a-year. He died at Chertsey; and his death was occasioned by a mean accident whilst his great friend Dean Sprat was with him on a visit there. They had been together to see a neighbour of Cowley's, who (according to the fashion of those times) made them too welcome. They did not set out for their walk home till it was too late, and had drank so deep that they lay out in the fields all night. This gave Cowley the fever that carried him off. The parish still talk of the drunken Dean.—Pope: *Spence by Singer*, p. 13.

[32] Whitehall, Aug. 4 [1667].—Yesterday, in the evening, the body of Mr. Abraham Cowley, who died the 28th past, was conveyed from Wallingford House to Westminster Abbey, accompanied by divers persons of eminent quality, who came to perform this last office to one who had been the great ornament of our nation, as well by the candour of his life as the excellency of his writings.—*The London Gazette*, Aug. 1 to Aug. 5, 1667.

3rd Aug. 1667.—Went to Mr. Cowley's funeral, whose corpse lay at Wallingford House, and was thence conveyed to Westminster Abbey in a hearse with six horses and all funeral decency, near a hundred coaches of noblemen and persons of quality following; among these all the wits of the town, divers bishops and clergymen.—Evelyn.

The monument to his memory in Westminster Abbey was erected in May, 1675, at the expense of Villiers Duke of Buckingham, though Tom Brown, in his 'Walk round London,' says it was never paid for by the Duke. Cowley and the Duke were at Trinity College, Cambridge, together. Sprat (or, it is said, Clifford) wrote the inscription, which Johnson tells us ('Essay on Epitaphs') he could never read but with "indignation or contempt."

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to add to the narrative of Dr. Sprat, who, writing when the feuds of the civil war were yet recent, and the minds of either party were easily irritated, was obliged to pass over many transactions in general expressions, and to leave curiosity often unsatisfied. What he did not tell, cannot however now be known. I must therefore recommend the perusal of his work, to which my narration can be considered only as a slender supplement.[33]

Cowley, like other poets who have written with narrow views, and, instead of tracing intellectual pleasures in the mind of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the *metaphysical poets*,[34] of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to show

[33] There are several portraits of Cowley. The great Lord Clarendon's portrait is now at Bothwell Castle; a fair original (but poorly engraved by Faithorne before his Works) is in the Bodleian Gallery; and at Drayton Manor is the famous Lely, representing him as a Shepherd, the picture bought by the minister Sir Robert Peel at the Strawberry-hill sale, and fairly engraved by Harding.

[34] The designation is not fortunate; but so much respect is due to Johnson that it would be unbecoming to substitute, even if it were easy to propose, one which might be unexceptionable.—SOUTHEY: *Life of Cowper*, ii. 127.

But Johnson follows his favourite Dryden:—

Donne affects the metaphysics not only in his Satires, but in his amorous verses, where Nature only should reign.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of Juvenal*, 1693.

Pope adopted the expression, when, in speaking to Spence of Cowley, he observed, "He as well as Davenant borrowed his metaphysical style from Donne."—*Spence by Singer*, p. 173.

The metaphysical school, which marred a good poet in Cowley, and found its proper direction in Butler, expired in Norris of Bemerton.—SOUTHEY: *Quar. Rev.* xii. 82.

their learning was their whole endeavour; but, unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry τέχνη μιμητική, *an imitative art*, these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets, for they cannot be said to have imitated anything; they neither copied nature for life, neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those, however, who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne in wit, but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.[35]

If wit be well described by Pope,[36] as being "that which has been often thought, but was never before so well expressed," they certainly never attained, nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope's account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous: he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as wit which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that which he that never found it wonders how he missed, to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the

[35] Dr. Donne, the greatest wit, though not the best poet, of our nation.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of Eleonora*, 1692.

Would not Donne's Satires, which abound with so much wit, appear more charming if he had taken care of his words and of his numbers? . . . . I may safely say it of this present age, that if we are not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of Juvenal*, 1693.

[36] 'Essay on Criticism.'

reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found.

But wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors;* a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs, and their subtility surprises; but the reader commonly thinks his improvement dearly bought, and, though he sometimes admires, is seldom pleased.

From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred that they were not successful in representing or moving the affections. As they were wholly employed on something unexpected and surprising, they had no regard to that uniformity of sentiment which enables us to conceive and to excite the pains and the pleasure of other minds: they never inquired what, on any occasion, they should have said or done, but wrote rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure; as Epicurean deities, making remarks on the actions of men, and the vicissitudes of life, without interest and without emotion. Their courtship was void of fondness, and their lamentation of sorrow. Their wish was only to say what they hoped had been never said before.

Nor was the sublime more within their reach than the pathetic; for they never attempted that comprehension and expanse of thought which at once fills the whole mind, and of which the first effect is sudden astonishment, and the second rational admiration. Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. It is with great propriety that subtlety, which in its original import means exility of particles, is taken in its metaphorical meaning for nicety of distinction.

Those writers who lay on the watch for novelty could have little hope of greatness; for great things cannot have escaped former observation. Their attempts were always analytic; they broke every image into fragments; and could no more represent, by their slender conceits and laboured particularities, the prospects of nature, or the scenes of life, than he who dissects a sun-beam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon.

What they wanted however of the sublime, they endeavoured to supply by hyperbole; their amplification had no limits; they left not only reason but fancy behind them; and produced combinations of confused magnificence, that not only could not be credited, but could not be imagined.

Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost: if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth; if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think. No man could be born a metaphysical poet, nor assume the dignity of a writer, by descriptions copied from descriptions, by imitations borrowed from imitations, by traditional imagery, and hereditary similes, by readiness of rhyme, and volubility of syllables.

In perusing the works of this race of authors, the mind is exercised either by recollection or inquiry; either something already learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined. If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed; and in the mass of materials which ingenious absurdity has thrown together, genuine wit and useful knowledge may be sometimes found buried perhaps in grossness of expression, but useful to those who know their value; and such as, when they are expanded to perspicuity, and polished to elegance, may give lustre to works which have more propriety though less copiousness of sentiment.

This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by the

example of Donne, a man of a very extensive and various knowledge; and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of his lines than in the cast of his sentiments.[37]

When their reputation was high, they had undoubtedly more imitators than time has left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleveland, and Milton.[38] Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysic style only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors, having as much sentiment and more music. Suckling neither improved versification, nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable style remained chiefly with Cowley; Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it.

Critical remarks are not easily understood without examples; and I have therefore collected instances of the modes of writing by which this species of poets, for poets they were called by themselves and their admirers, was eminently distinguished.

As the authors of this race were perhaps more desirous of being admired than understood, they sometimes drew their conceits from recesses of learning not very much frequented by common readers of poetry. Thus Cowley on *Knowledge:*

> "The sacred tree midst the fair orchard grew;
> The phœnix Truth did on it rest,
> And built his perfum'd nest,
> That right Porphyrian tree which did true logic show.
> Each leaf did learned notions give,
> And th' apples were demonstrative:
> So clear their colour and divine,
> The very shade they cast did other lights outshine."

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[37] Nothing, indeed, could have made Donne a poet, unless as great a change had been worked in the internal structure of his ears as was wrought in elongating those of Midas.—SOUTHEY: *Specimens of the Later English Poets*, 1807, vol. i. p. xxiv.

[38] Crashaw and Herbert surely should have found a place in such an enumeration of names.

On Anacreon continuing a lover in his old age:

" Love was with thy life entwin'd,
Close as heat with fire is join'd,
A powerful brand prescrib'd the date
Of thine, like Meleager's fate,
Th' antiperistasis of age
More inflam'd thy amorous rage."

Elegy upon Anacreon.

In the following verses we have an allusion to a Rabbinical opinion concerning Manna:

" Variety I ask not: give me one
To live perpetually upon.
The person Love does to us fit,
Like manna, has the taste of all in it."

Thus Donne shows his medicinal knowledge in some encomiastic verses:

" In every thing there naturally grows
A balsamum to keep it fresh and new,
If 't were not injur'd by extrinsique blows;
Your birth and beauty are this balm in you.
But you, of learning and religion,
And virtue, and such ingredients, have made
A mithridate, whose operation
Keeps off, or cures what can be done or said."

DONNE: *To the Countess of Bedford.*

Though the following lines of Donne, on the last night of the year, have something in them too scholastic, they are not inelegant:

" This twilight of two years, not past nor next,
Some emblem is of me, or I of this,
Who, meteor-like, of stuff and form perplext,
Whose what and where in disputation is,
If I should call me anything, should miss.
I sum the years and me, and find me not
Debtor to th' old, nor creditor to th' new;
That cannot say, my thanks I have forgot,
Nor trust I this with hopes; and yet scarce true
This bravery is, since these times show'd me you."

DONNE: *To the Countess of Bedford.*

Yet more abstruse and profound is Donne's reflection upon man as a microcosm:

" If men be worlds, there is in every one
Something to answer in some proportion
All the world's riches: and in good men, this
Virtue, our form's form, and our soul's soul is."

Of thoughts so far fetched, as to be not only unexpected but unnatural, all their books are full.

To a Lady, who made posies for rings.

" They, who above do various circles find,
Say, like a ring th' æquator heaven does bind.
When heaven shall be adorn'd by thee,
(Which then more heaven than 'tis, will be,)
'Tis thou must write the poesy there,
For it wanteth one as yet,
Though the sun pass through 't twice a year,
The sun, who is esteem'd the god of wit."

COWLEY.

The difficulties which have been raised about identity in philosophy, are by Cowley with still more perplexity applied to love:

" Five years ago (says story) I lov'd you,
For which you call me most inconstant now:
Pardon me, madam, you mistake the man;
For I am not the same that I was then;
No flesh is now the same 'twas then in me,
And that my mind is chang'd yourself may see.
The same thoughts to retain still, and intents,
Were more inconstant far: for accidents
Must of all things most strangely inconstant prove,
If from one subject they t' another move:
My members then, the father members were
From whence these take their birth, which now are here.
If then this body love what th' other did,
'Twere incest, which by nature is forbid."

Inconstancy.

The love of different women is, in geographical poetry, compared to travels through different countries:

" Hast thou not found each woman's breast
(The land where thou hast travelled)
Either by savages possest,
Or wild, and uninhabited?
What joy could'st take, or what repose,
In countries so uncivilis'd as those?
. . . . . .

Lust, the scorching dog-star, here
Rages with immoderate heat;
Whilst Pride, the rugged Northern Bear,
In others makes the cold too great.
And where these are temperate known,
The soil 's all barren sand, or rocky stone."

COWLEY: *The Welcome.*

A lover, burnt up by his affection, is compared to Egypt:

" The fate of Egypt I sustain,
And never feel the dew of rain
From clouds which in the head appear;
But all my too much moisture owe
To overflowings of the heart below."

COWLEY: *Sleep.*

The lover supposes his lady acquainted with the ancient laws of augury and rites of sacrifice:

" And yet this death of mine, I fear,
Will ominous to her appear:
When, sound in every other part,
Her sacrifice is found without an heart.
For the last tempest of my death
Shall sigh out that too, with my breath."

COWLEY: *The Concealment.*

That the chaos was harmonised, has been recited of old; but whence the different sounds arose remained for a modern to discover:

" Th' ungovern'd parts no correspondence knew;
An artless war from thwarting motions grew;
Till they to number and fixt rules were brought.
Water and air he for the tenor chose;
Earth made the base; the treble, flame arose."

COWLEY.

The tears of lovers are always of great poetical account; but Donne has extended them into worlds. If the lines are not easily understood, they may be read again:

" On a round ball
A workman, that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, All.

So doth each tear,
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea would, by that impression grow,
Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee my heaven dissolved so."

A Valediction of Weeping.

On reading the following lines, the reader may perhaps cry out—*Confusion worse confounded:*

" Here lies a she sun, and a he moon there,
She gives the best light to his sphere,
Or each is both, and all, and so
They unto one another nothing owe."

DONNE: *Epithalamion on the Count Palatine, &c.*

Who but Donne would have thought that a good man is a telescope?

" Though God be our true glass through which we see
All, since the being of all things is he,
Yet are the trunks, which do to us derive
Things in proportion fit, by perspective
Deeds of good men; for by their living here,
Virtues, indeed remote, seem to be near."

Who would imagine it possible that in a very few lines so many remote ideas could be brought together?

" Since 'tis my doom, Love's undershrieve,
Why this reprieve?
Why doth my she advowson fly
Incumbency?
To sell thyself dost thou intend
By candle's end,
And hold the contract thus in doubt,
Life's taper out?
Think but how soon the market fails,
Your sex lives faster than the males;
And if to measure age's span,
The sober Julian were th' account of man,
Whilst you live by the fleet Gregorian."

CLEVELAND: *To Julia to expedite her Promise.*

Of enormous and disgusting hyperboles, these may be examples:

" By every wind that comes this way,
Send me at least a sigh or two,
Such and so many I 'll repay
As shall themselves make winds to get to you."

COWLEY.

" In tears I 'll waste these eyes,
By Love so vainly fed;
So lust of old the Deluge punished."

COWLEY.

" All arm'd in brass, the richest dress of war,
(A dismal glorious sight,) he shone afar.
The sun himself started with sudden fright,
To see his beams return so dismal bright."

COWLEY.

An universal consternation:

" His bloody eyes he hurls round, his sharp paws
Tear up the ground; then runs he wild about,
Lashing his angry tail and roaring out.
Beasts creep into their dens, and tremble there:
Trees, though no wind is stirring, shake with fear;
Silence and horror fill the place around;
Echo itself dares scarce repeat the sound."

COWLEY.

Their fictions were often violent and unnatural.

Of his Mistress bathing.

" The fish around her crowded, as they do
To the false light that treacherous fishes show,
And all with as much ease might taken be,
As she at first took me:
For ne'er did light so clear
Among the waves appear,
Though every night the sun himself set there."

COWLEY.

The poetical effect of a lover's name upon glass:

" My name engrav'd herein
Doth contribute my firmness to this glass;
Which, ever since that charm, hath been
As hard as that which grav'd it was."

DONNE: *A Valediction of my Name in the Window.*

Their conceits were sentiments slight and trifling.

On an inconstant Woman.

" He enjoys thy calmy sunshine now,
And no breath stirring hears,
In the clear heaven of thy brow
No smallest cloud appears.
He sees thee gentle, fair, and gay,
And trusts the faithless April of thy May."

COWLEY: *in imitation of Horace.*

Upon a paper written with the juice of lemon, and read by the fire:

" So, nothing yet in thee is seen,
But when a genial heat warms thee within,
A new-born wood of various lines there grows;
Here buds an A, and there a B,
Here sprouts a V, and there a T,
And all the flourishing letters stand in rows."

COWLEY.

As they sought only for novelty, they did not much inquire whether their allusions were to things high or low, elegant or gross; whether they compared the little to the great, or the great to the little.

Physic and Chirurgery for a Lover.

" Gently, ah gently, madam, touch
The wound which you yourself have made;
That pain must needs be very much,
Which makes me of your hand afraid.
Cordials of pity give me now,
For I too weak for purgings grow."

COWLEY: *Counsel.*

The World and a Clock.

" Mahol, th' inferior world's fantastic face
Thro' all the turns of matter's maze did trace:
Great Nature's well-set clock in pieces took;
On all the springs and smallest wheels did look
Of life and motion, and with equal art
Made up again the whole of every part."

COWLEY: *Davideis*, book i.

A coal-pit has not often found its poet; but that it may not want its due honour, Cleveland has paralleled it with the sun:

"The moderate value of our guiltless ore
Makes no man atheist, nor no woman whore;
Yet why should hallow'd vestal's sacred shrine
Deserve more honour than a flaming mine?
These pregnant wombs of heat would fitter be,
Than a few embers, for a deity.
Had he our pits, the Persian would admire
No sun, but warm 's devotion at our fire:
He 'd leave the trotting whipster, and prefer
Our profound Vulcan 'bove that waggoner.
For wants he heat, or light? or would have store,
Of both? 'tis here: and what can suns give more?
Nay, what 's the sun but, in a different name,
A coal-pit rampant, or a mine on flame?
Then let this truth reciprocally run,
The sun 's heaven's coalery, and coals our sun."

CLEVELAND: *News from Newcastle.*

Death, a Voyage.

"No family
E'er rigg'd a soul for heaven's discovery,
With whom more venturers might boldly dare
Venture their stakes, with him in joy to share."

DONNE.

Their thoughts and expressions were sometimes grossly absurd, and such as no figures or licence can reconcile to the understanding.

A Lover neither dead nor alive.

"Then down I laid my head,
Down on cold earth; and for a while was dead,
And my freed soul to a strange somewhere fled;
'Ah, sottish soul,' said I,
When back to its cage again I saw it fly;
'Fool to resume her broken chain,
And row her galley here again!
Fool to that body to return
Where it condemn'd and destin'd is to burn!
Once dead, how can it be,
Death should a thing so pleasant seem to thee,
That thou should'st come to live it o'er again in me?'"

COWLEY: *The Despair.*

A Lover's heart, a hand grenado.

" Wo to her stubborn heart, if once mine come
Into the self-same room,
'Twill tear and blow up all within,
Like a grenado shot into a magazine.
Then shall Love keep the ashes, and torn parts,
Of both our broken hearts:
Shall out of both one new one make;
From her's th' allay; from mine, the metal take."

COWLEY: *The Given Heart.*

The poetical propagation of light:

" The prince's favour is diffus'd o'er all,
From which all fortunes, names, and natures fall;
Then from those wombs of stars, the bride's bright eyes,
At every glance a constellation flies
And sowes the court with stars, and doth prevent
In light and power, the all-ey'd firmament:
First her eye kindles other ladies' eyes,
Then from their beams their jewels lustres rise;
And from their jewels torches do take fire,
And all is warmth, and light, and good desire."

DONNE.

They were in very little care to clothe their notions with elegance of dress, and therefore miss the notice and the praise which are often gained by those who think less, but are more diligent to adorn their thoughts.

That a mistress beloved is fairer in idea than in reality, is by Cowley thus expressed:

" Thou in my fancy dost much higher stand
Than women can be plac'd by Nature's hand;
And I must needs, I'm sure, a loser be,
To change thee, as thou 'rt there, for very thee."

COWLEY: *Against Fruition.*

That prayer and labour should co-operate, are thus taught by Donne:

" In none but us are such mixt engines found,
As hands of double office; for the ground
We till with them; and them to heaven we raise:
Who prayerless labours, or, without this, prays,
Doth but one half, that 's none."

By the same author, a common topic, the danger of procrastination, is thus illustrated:

"——— That which I should have begun
In my youth's morning, now late must be done;
And I, as giddy travellers must do,
Which stray or sleep all day, and having lost
Light and strength, dark and tir'd, must then ride post."

DONNE: *To M. B. B.*

All that man has to do is to live and die: the sum of humanity is comprehended by Donne in the following lines:

"Think in how poor a prison thou didst lie;
After enabled but to suck and cry.
Think, when 'twas grown to most, 'twas a poor inn,
A province pack'd up in two yards of skin,
And that usurp'd, or threaten'd with a rage
Of sicknesses, or their true mother, age.
But think that death hath now enfranchis'd thee;
Thou hast thy expansion now, and liberty;
Think, that a rusty piece discharg'd is flown
In pieces, and the bullet is his own,
And freely flies: this to thy soul allow,
Think thy shell broke, think thy soul hatch'd but now."

DONNE: *The Progress of the Soul.*

They were sometimes indelicate and disgusting. Cowley thus apostrophises beauty:

"—— Thou tyrant, which leav'st no man free!
Thou subtle thief, from whom nought safe can be!
Thou murtherer, which hast kill'd, and devil, which would'st damn me!"

COWLEY: *Beauty.*

Thus he addresses his mistress:

"Thou who, in many a propriety,
So truly art the sun to me,
Add one more likeness, which I 'm sure you can,
And let me and my sun beget a man."

COWLEY: *The Parting.*

Thus he represents the meditations of a lover:

"Though in thy thoughts scarce any tracts have been
So much as of original sin,
Such charms thy beauty wears as might
Desires in dying confest saints excite.

Thou with strange adultery
Dost in each breast a brothel keep;
Awake, all men do lust for thee,
And some enjoy thee when they sleep."

COWLEY.

The true Taste of Tears.

"Hither with crystal vials, lovers, come,
And take my tears, which are love's wine,
And try your mistress' tears at home;
For all are false, that taste not just like mine."

DONNE: *Twickenham Garden.*

This is yet more indelicate:

"As the sweet sweat of roses in a still,
As that which from chaf'd musk-cat's pores doth trill,
As the almighty balm of th' early East;
Such are the sweat drops of my mistress' breast.
And on her neck her skin such lustre sets,
They seem no sweat drops, but pearl coronets:
Rank, sweaty froth thy mistress' brow defiles."

DONNE: *Elegie VIII.*

Their expressions sometimes raise horror, when they intend perhaps to be pathetic:

"As men in hell are from diseases free,
So from all other ills am I,
Free from their known formality:
But all pains eminently lie in thee."

COWLEY: *The Usurpation.*

They were not always strictly curious, whether the opinions from which they drew their illustrations were true; it was enough that they were popular. Bacon remarks, that some falsehoods are continued by tradition, because they supply commodious allusions.

"It gave a piteous groan, and so it broke:
In vain it something would have spoke:
The love within too strong for't was,
Like poison put into a Venice-glass."

COWLEY: *The Heartbreaking.*

In forming descriptions, they looked out, not for images, but

for conceits. Night has been a common subject, which poets have contended to adorn. Dryden's 'Night' is well known; Donne's is as follows:

"Thou seest me here at midnight, now all rest:
Time's dead low-water; when all minds divest
To-morrow's business, when the labourers have
Such rest in bed, that their last church-yard grave,
Subject to change, will scarce be a type of this,
Now when the client, whose last hearing is
To-morrow, sleeps; when the condemned man,
Who, when he opes his eyes, must shut them then
Again by death, although sad watch he keep,
Doth practise dying by a little sleep,
Thou at this midnight seest me."

It must be however confessed of these writers, that if they are upon common subjects often unnecessarily and unpoetically subtle; yet where scholastic speculation can be properly admitted, their copiousness and acuteness may justly be admired. What Cowley has written upon Hope shows an unequalled fertility of invention:

"Hope, whose weak being ruin'd is,
Alike if it succeed, and if it miss;
Whom good or ill does equally confound,
And both the horns of Fate's dilemma wound;
Vain shadow! which dost vanquish quite,
Both at full noon and perfect night!
The stars have not a possibility
Of blessing thee;
If things then from their end we happy call,
'Tis Hope is the most hopeless thing of all.
Hope, thou bold taster of delight,
Who, whilst thou should'st but taste, devour'st it quite!
Thou bring'st us an estate, yet leav'st us poor,
By clogging it with legacies before!
The joys which we entire should wed,
Come deflower'd virgins to our bed;
Good fortunes without gain imported be,
Such mighty custom 's paid to thee:
For joy, like wine kept close, does better taste;
If it take air before its spirits waste."

COWLEY: *Against Hope.*

To the following comparison of a man that travels, and his

wife that stays at home, with a pair of compasses, it may be doubted whether absurdity or ingenuity has the better claim:

"Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.
If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin-compasses are two;
Thy soul the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.
And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.
Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot obliquely run.
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun."

DONNE: *A Valediction forbidding Mourning.*

In all these examples it is apparent, that whatever is improper or vicious is produced by a voluntary deviation from nature in pursuit of something new and strange; and that the writers fail to give delight, by their desire of exciting admiration.

Having thus endeavoured to exhibit a general representation of the style and sentiments of the metaphysical poets, it is now proper to examine particularly the works of Cowley, who was almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.

His 'Miscellanies' contain a collection of short compositions, written, some as they were dictated by a mind at leisure, and some as they were called forth by different occasions; with great variety of style and sentiment, from burlesque levity to awful grandeur. Such an assemblage of diversified excellence no other poet has hitherto afforded. To choose the best, among many good, is one of the most hazardous attempts of criticism. I know not whether Scaliger himself has persuaded many readers to join with him in his preference of the two favourite odes, which he estimates in his raptures at the value of a kingdom. I will however venture to recommend Cowley's first piece, which

ought to be inscribed 'To my Muse,' for want of which the second couplet is without reference. When the title is added, there will still remain a defect; for every piece ought to contain in itself whatever is necessary to make it intelligible. Pope has some epitaphs without names; which are therefore epitaphs to be let, occupied indeed for the present, but hardly appropriated.

The ode on Wit is almost without a rival. It was about the time of Cowley that *Wit*, which had been till then used for *Intellection*, in contradistinction to *Will*, took the meaning, whatever it be, which it now [1779] bears.

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of wit:

> "Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,
> That shows more cost than art.
> Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear;
> Rather than all things wit, let none be there.
> Several lights will not be seen,
> If there be nothing else between.
> Men doubt, because they stand so thick i' th' sky,
> If those be stars which paint the galaxy."
>
> COWLEY: *Ode of Wit.*

In his verses to Lord Falkland, whom every man of his time was proud to praise, there are, as there must be in all Cowley's compositions, some striking thoughts, but they are not well wrought. His elegy on Sir Henry Wotton is vigorous and happy, the series of thoughts is easy and natural, and the conclusion, though a little weakened by the intrusion of Alexander, is elegant and forcible.

It may be remarked, that in this elegy, and in most of his encomiastic poems, he has forgotten or neglected to name his heroes.

In his poem on the death of Hervey, there is much praise, but little passion, a very just and ample delineation of such virtues as a studious privacy admits, and such intellectual excellence as a mind not yet called forth to action can display. He

knew how to distinguish, and how to commend the qualities of his companion; but when he wishes to make us weep, he forgets to weep himself, and diverts his sorrow by imagining how his crown of bays, if he had it, would *crackle* in the *fire*. It is the odd fate of this thought to be worse for being true. The bay-leaf crackles remarkably as it burns; as therefore this property was not assigned it by chance, the mind must be thought sufficiently at ease that could attend to such minuteness of physiology. But the power of Cowley is not so much to move the affections, as to exercise the understanding.

The 'Chronicle' is a composition unrivalled and alone: such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is in vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility; his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastic mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critic, mingle their influence even in this airy frolic of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge, but not the gaiety.

The verses to Davenant, which are vigorously begun, and happily concluded, contain some hints of criticism very justly conceived and happily expressed. Cowley's critical abilities have not been sufficiently observed: the few decisions and remarks which his prefaces and his notes on the 'Davideis' supply, were at that time accessions to English literature, and show such skill as raises our wish for more examples.

The lines from Jersey are a very curious and pleasing specimen of the familiar descending to the burlesque.

His two metrical disquisitions *for* and *against* Reason are no mean specimens of metaphysical poetry. The stanzas against Knowledge produce little conviction. In those which are intended to exalt the human faculties, reason has its proper task assigned it; that of judging, not of things revealed, but of the reality of revelation. In the verses *for* reason is a passage which Bentley, in the only English verses which he is known to

have written, seems to have copied, though with the inferiority of an imitator.

> "The Holy Book like the eighth sphere does shine
> With thousand lights of truth divine,
> So numberless the stars that to the eye
> It makes but all one galaxy:
> Yet Reason must assist too; for in seas
> So vast and dangerous as these,
> Our course by stars above we cannot know
> Without the compass too below."

After this says Bentley:

> "Who travels in religious jars,
> Truth mix'd with error, shade with rays,
> Like Whiston wanting pyx or stars,
> In ocean wide or sinks or strays."

Cowley seems to have had, what Milton is believed to have wanted, the skill to rate his own performances by their just value, and has therefore closed his 'Miscellanies' with the verses upon Crashaw, which apparently excel all that have gone before them, and in which there are beauties which common authors may justly think not only above their attainment, but above their ambition.

To the 'Miscellanies' succeed the 'Anacreontiques,' or paraphrastical translations of some little poems, which pass, however justly, under the name of Anacreon. Of those songs dedicated to festivity and gaiety, in which even the morality is voluptuous, and which teach nothing but the enjoyment of the present day, he has given rather a pleasing than a faithful representation, having retained their sprightliness, but lost their simplicity. The Anacreon of Cowley, like the Homer of Pope, has admitted the decoration of some modern graces, by which he is undoubtedly more amiable to common readers, and perhaps, if they would honestly declare their own preceptions,—to far the greater part of those whom courtesy and ignorance are content to style the learned.

These little pieces will be found more finished in their kind than any other of Cowley's works. The diction shows nothing of the mould of time, and the sentiments are at no great distance

from our present habitudes of thought. Real mirth must be always natural, and nature is uniform. Men have been wise in very different modes; but they have always laughed the same way.

Levity of thought naturally produced familiarity of language, and the familiar part of language continues long the same; the dialogue of comedy, when it is transcribed from popular manners and real life, is read from age to age with equal pleasure. The artifice of inversion, by which the established order of words is changed, or of innovation, by which new words or meanings of words are introduced, is practised, not by those who talk to be understood, but by those who write to be admired.

The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley give now all the pleasure which they ever gave. If he was formed by nature for one kind of writing more than for another, his power seems to have been greatest in the familiar and the festive.

The next class of his poems is called 'The Mistress,' of which it is not necessary to select any particular pieces for praise or censure. They have all the same beauties and faults, and nearly in the same proportion. They are written with exuberance of wit, and with copiousness of learning; and it is truly asserted by Sprat, that the plenitude of the writer's knowledge flows in upon his page, so that the reader is commonly surprised into some improvement. But, considered as the verses of a lover, no man that has ever loved will much commend them. They are neither courtly nor pathetic, have neither gallantry nor fondness. His praises are too far sought, and too hyperbolical, either to express love, or to excite it; every stanza is crowded with darts and flames, with wounds and death, with mingled souls, and with broken hearts.

The principal artifice by which 'The Mistress' is filled with conceits is very copiously displayed by Addison.[39] Love is by Cowley, as by other poets, expressed metaphorically by flame and fire; and that which is true of real fire is said of love, or

[39] 'Spectator,' No. 62.

figurative fire, the same word in the same sentence retaining both significations. Thus, "observing the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, he considers them as burning-glasses made of ice. Finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, he concludes the torrid zone to be habitable. Upon the dying of a tree, on which he had cut his loves, he observes, that his flames had burnt up and withered the tree."

These conceits Addison calls "mixed wit;" that is, wit which consists of thoughts true in one sense of the expression, and false in the other. Addison's representation is sufficiently indulgent. That confusion of images may entertain for a moment; but being unnatural, it soon grows wearisome. Cowley delighted in it, as much as if he had invented it; but, not to mention the ancients, he might have found it full-blown in modern Italy. Thus Sannazaro:

"Aspice quam variis distringar Lesbia curis!
Uror, et heu! nostro manat ab igne liquor;
Sum Nilus, sumque Ætna simul; restringite flammas
O lacrimæ, aut lacrimas ebibe flamma meas."

One of the severe theologians of that time censured him as having published *a book of profane and lascivious verses*. From the charge of profaneness, the constant tenor of his life, which seems to have been eminently virtuous, and the general tendency of his opinions, which discover no irreverence of religion, must defend him; but that the accusation of lasciviousness is unjust, the perusal of his works will sufficiently evince.

Cowley's 'Mistress' has no power of seduction: "she plays round the head, but reaches not the heart." Her beauty and absence, her kindness and cruelty, her disdain and inconstancy, produce no correspondence of emotion. His poetical account of the virtues of plants, and colours of flowers, is not perused with more sluggish frigidity. The compositions are such as might have been written for penance by a hermit, or for hire by a philosophical rhymer who had only heard of another sex; for they turn the mind only on the writer, whom, without think-

ing on a woman but as the subject for his task, we sometimes esteem as learned, and sometimes despise as trifling, always admire as ingenious, and always condemn as unnatural.

The Pindarique Odes are now to be considered; a species of composition which Cowley thinks Pancirolus might have counted *in his list of the lost inventions of antiquity*, and which he has made a bold and vigorous attempt to recover.

The purpose with which he has paraphrased an Olympic and Nemæan Ode is by himself sufficiently explained. His endeavour was, not to show *precisely what Pindar spoke, but his* [way and] *manner of speaking.* He was therefore not at all restrained to his expressions, nor much to his sentiments; nothing was required of him, but not to write as Pindar would not have written.

Of the Olympic Ode the beginning is, I think, above the original in elegance, and the conclusion below it in strength. The connection is supplied with great perspicuity, and the thoughts, which to a reader of less skill seem thrown together by chance, are concatenated without any abruption. Though the English ode cannot be called a translation, it may be very properly consulted as a commentary.

The spirit of Pindar is indeed not everywhere equally preserved. The following pretty lines are not such as his *deep mouth* was used to pour:

> "[Great Rhea's son,]
> If in Olympus' top where thou
> Sitt'st to behold thy sacred show,
> If in Alpheus' silver flight,
> If in my verse thou dost delight,
> My verse, O Rhea's son, which is
> Lofty as that, and smooth as this."
>
> Cowley: *2nd Olympique Ode.*

In the Nemæan ode the reader must, in mere justice to Pindar, observe that whatever is said of *the original new moon, her tender forehead and her horns*, is superadded by his paraphrast, who has many other plays of words and fancy unsuitable to the original, as,

"The table which is free for every guest,
No doubt will thee admit,
And feast more upon thee, than thou on it."

COWLEY: *1st Nemœan Ode.*

He sometimes extends his author's thoughts without improving them. In the Olympionic an oath is mentioned in a single word, and Cowley spends three lines in swearing by the *Castalian Stream.* We are told of Theron's bounty, with a hint that he had enemies, which Cowley thus enlarges in rhyming prose:

"But in this thankless world the givers
Are envied even by the receivers;
'Tis now the cheap and frugal fashion
Rather to hide than pay the obligation:
Nay, 'tis much worse than so;
It now an artifice does grow
Wrongs and outrages to do,
Lest men should think we owe."

COWLEY: *2nd Ol. Ode.*

It is hard to conceive that a man of the first rank in learning and wit, when he was dealing out such minute morality in such feeble diction, could imagine, either waking or dreaming, that he imitated Pindar.

In the following odes, where Cowley chooses his own subjects, he sometimes rises to dignity truly Pindaric; and, if some deficiencies of language be forgiven, his strains are such as those of the Theban bard were to his contemporaries:

"Begin the song, and strike the living lyre:
Lo how the years to come, a numerous and well-fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal measures dance;
While the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,
My music's voice shall bear it company;
Till all gentle notes be drown'd
In the last trumpet's dreadful sound."

COWLEY: *The Resurrection.*

After such enthusiasm, who will not lament to find the poet conclude with lines like these?—

"Stop, stop, my Muse . . .
Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,
Which does to rage begin . . .

—'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouth'd horse . . .
'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure."

The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to the last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality; for of the greatest things the parts are little; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration, and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied.

Of this we have a very eminent example in the ode entitled 'The Muse,' who goes to *take the air* in an intellectual chariot, to which he harnesses Fancy and Judgment, Wit and Eloquence, Memory and Invention; how he distinguished Wit from Fancy, or how Memory could properly contribute to Motion, he has not explained: we are, however, content to suppose that he could have justified his own fiction, and wish to see the Muse begin her career; but there is yet more to be done.

"Let the *postilion* Nature mount, and let
The *coachman* Art be set;
And let the airy *footman*, running all beside,
Make a long row of goodly pride;
Figures, conceits, raptures, and sentences,
In a well-worded dress,
And innocent loves, and pleasant truths, and useful lies,
In all their gaudy *liveries*."

Every mind is now disgusted with this cumber of magnificence; yet I cannot refuse myself the four next lines:

"Mount, glorious queen, thy travelling throne,
And bid it to put on;
For long though cheerful is the way,
And life, alas! allows but one ill winter's day."

In the same ode, celebrating the power of the Muse, he gives her prescience, or, in poetical language, the foresight of events

hatching in futurity; but having once an egg in his mind, he cannot forbear to show us that he knows what an egg contains:

"Thou into the close nests of Time dost peep,
And there with piercing eye
Through the firm shell and the thick white dost spy
Years to come a-forming lie,
Close in their sacred fecundine asleep."

The same thought is more generally, and therefore more poetically, expressed by Casimir, a writer who has many of the beauties and faults of Cowley:

"Omnibus mundi Dominator horis
Aptat urgendas per inane pennas,
Pars adhuc nido latet, et futuros
Crescit in annos."

Cowley, whatever was his subject, seems to have been carried, by a kind of destiny, to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea *new dyes the water's name;* and England, during the Civil War, was *Albion no more, nor to be named from white.* It is surely by some fascination not easily surmounted, that a writer, professing to revive *the noblest and highest writing in verse*, makes this address to the New Year:

"Nay, if thou lov'st me, gentle year,
Let not so much as love be there—
Vain, fruitless love I mean; for, gentle year,
Although I fear
There's of this caution little need,
Yet, gentle year, take heed
How thou dost make
Such a mistake;
Such love I mean alone
As by thy cruel predecessors has been shown;
For, though I have too much cause to doubt it,
I fain would try, for once, if life can live without it."

The reader of this will be inclined to cry out with Prior[40]—

"*Ye critics, say,*
How poor to this was Pindar's style!"

[40] 'Burlesque on Boileau.'

Even those who cannot perhaps find in the Isthmian or Nemæan songs what antiquity had disposed them to expect, will at least see that they are ill represented by such puny poetry; and all will determine that, if this be the old Theban strain, it is not worthy of revival.

To the disproportion and incongruity of Cowley's sentiments must be added the uncertainty and looseness of his measures. He takes the liberty of using in any place a verse of any length, from two syllables to twelve. The verses of Pindar have, as he observes, very little harmony to a modern ear; yet by examining the syllables we perceive them to be regular, and have reason enough for supposing that the ancient audiences were delighted with the sound. The imitator ought therefore to have adopted what he found, and to have added what was wanting; to have preserved a constant return of the same numbers, and to have supplied smoothness of transition and continuity of thought.[41]

It is urged by Dr. Sprat, that the *irregularity of numbers is the very thing* which makes *that kind of poesy fit for all manner of subjects.* But he should have remembered, that what is fit for everything can fit nothing well. The great pleasure of verse arises from the known measure of the lines, and uniform structure of the stanzas, by which the voice is regulated, and the memory relieved.

If the Pindaric style be, what Cowley thinks it, *the noblest and highest kind of writing in verse,* it can be adapted only to high and noble subjects; and it will not be easy to reconcile the poet with the critic, or to conceive how that can be the highest kind of writing in verse which, according to Sprat, *is chiefly to be preferred for its near affinity to prose.*

This lax and lawless versification so much concealed the

[41] Cowley mistook the very nature of Pindar's poetry, at least of such as is come down to us, and while he professed to "imitate the style and manner of his odes," was led away by the ancient allusions and those wild and wonderful strains of which not a line has reached us. The metre of Pindar is regular, that of Cowley is utterly lawless; and his perpetual straining after points of wit seems to show that he had formed no correcter notion of his *manner* than of his style.—GIFFORD: *Ben Jonson,* ix. 8.

See also note at end of Congreve's Life in this edition of Johnson.

deficiencies of the barren, and flattered the laziness of the idle, that it immediately overspread our books of poetry; all the boys and girls caught the pleasing fashion, and they that could do nothing else could write like Pindar. The rights of antiquity were invaded, and disorder tried to break into the Latin: a poem on the Sheldonian Theatre,[42] in which all kinds of verse are shaken together, is unhappily inserted in the 'Musæ Anglicanæ.' Pindarism prevailed about half a century; but at last died gradually away, and other imitations supply its place.

The Pindaric Odes have so long enjoyed the highest degree of poetical reputation, that I am not willing to dismiss them with unabated censure; and surely though the mode of their composition be erroneous, yet many parts deserve at least that admiration which is due to great comprehension of knowledge, and great fertility of fancy. The thoughts are often new, and often striking; but the greatness of one part is disgraced by the littleness of another; and total negligence of language gives the noblest conceptions the appearance of a fabric august in the plan, but mean in the materials. Yet surely those verses are not without a just claim to praise; of which it may be said with truth, that no man but Cowley could have written them.

The 'Davideis' now remains to be considered, a poem which the author designed to have extended to twelve books, merely, as he makes no scruple of declaring, because the Æneid had that number; but he had leisure or perseverance only to write the third part.[43] Epic poems have been left unfinished by Virgil, Statius, Spenser, and Cowley. That we have not the whole 'Davideis' is, however, not much to be regretted; for in this undertaking Cowley is, tacitly at least, confessed to have miscarried. There are not many examples of so great a work, produced by an author generally read, and generally praised, that has crept through a century with so little regard. What-

[42] "Carmen Pindaricum in Theatrum Sheldonianum in solennibus magnifici Operis Encœniis. Recitatum Julii die 9, Anno 1669, a Corbetto Owen, A.B., Æd. Chr. Alumno Authore." 1669. 4to.

[43] There is a *fourth* part, as indeed Johnson himself states at p. 50.

ever is said of Cowley, is meant of his other works. Of the 'Davideis' no mention is made; it never appears in books, nor emerges in conversation. By the 'Spectator' it has been once quoted; by Rymer it has once been praised; and by Dryden, in 'Mac Flecknoe,' it has once been imitated; nor do I recollect much other notice from its publication till now in the whole succession of English literature.

Of this silence and neglect, if the reason be inquired, it will be found partly in the choice of the subject, and partly in the performance of the work.

Sacred history has been always read with submissive reverence, and an imagination over-awed and controlled. We have been accustomed to acquiesce in the nakedness and simplicity of the authentic narrative, and to repose on its veracity with such humble confidence as suppresses curiosity. We go with the historian as he goes, and stop with him when he stops. All amplification is frivolous and vain; all addition to that which is already sufficient for the purposes of religion, seems not only useless, but in some degree profane.

Such events as were produced by the visible interposition of Divine Power are above the power of human genius to dignify. The miracle of Creation, however it may teem with images, is best described with little diffusion of language: *He spake the word, and they were made.*

We are told that Saul *was troubled with an evil spirit;* from this Cowley takes an opportunity of describing hell, and telling the history of Lucifer, who was, he says:

> "Once general of a gilded host of sprites,
> Like Hesper leading forth the spangled nights;
> But down like lightning, which him struck, he came,
> And roar'd at his first plunge into the flame."
>
> *Book I.*

Lucifer makes a speech to the inferior agents of mischief, in which there is something of heathenism, and therefore of impropriety; and, to give efficacy to his words, concludes by lashing *his breast with his long tail.* Envy, after a pause, steps

out, and among other declarations of her zeal utters these lines:

> "Do thou but threat, loud storms shall make reply,
> And thunder echo 't to the trembling sky.
> Whilst raging seas swell to so bold an height,
> As shall the fire's proud element affright.
> Th' old drudging Sun, from his long-beaten way,
> Shall at thy voice start, and misguide the day.
> The jocund orbs shall break their measur'd pace,
> And stubborn poles change their allotted place.
> Heaven's gilded troops shall flutter here and there,
> Leaving their boasting songs tun'd to a sphere."
>
> *Book I.*

Every reader feels himself weary with this useless talk of an allegorical being.

It is not only when the events are confessedly miraculous that fancy and fiction lose their effect: the whole system of life, while the Theocracy was yet visible, has an appearance so different from all other scenes of human action that the reader of the Sacred Volume habitually considers it as the peculiar mode of existence of a distinct species of mankind, that lived and acted with manners uncommunicable; so that it is difficult even for imagination to place us in the state of them whose story is related, and by consequence their joys and griefs are not easily adopted, nor can the attention be often interested in anything that befalls them.

To the subject thus originally indisposed to the reception of poetical embellishments the writer brought little that could reconcile impatience or attract curiosity. Nothing can be more disgusting than a narrative spangled with conceits; and conceits are all that the 'Davideis' supplies.

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description, or the power of presenting pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images, and shows not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. When Virgil describes the stone which Turnus lifted against Æneas, he fixes the attention on its bulk and weight:

"Saxum circumspicit ingens,
Saxum antiquum, ingens, campo quod forte jacebat
Limes agro positus, litem ut discerneret arvis."

Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother:

"I saw him fling the stone, as if he meant
At once his murther and his monument."

Book I.

Of the sword taken from Goliah, he says:

"A sword so great, that it was only fit
To take off his great head who came with it."

Other poets describe death by some of its common appearances. Cowley says, with a learned allusion to sepulchral lamps, real or fabulous:

"'Twixt his right ribs deep pierc'd the furious blade,
And open'd wide those secret vessels where
Life's light goes out, when first they let in air."

Book IV.

But he has allusions vulgar as well as learned. In a visionary succession of kings:

"Joas at first does bright and glorious show,
In life's fresh morn his fame did early crow."

Book II.

Describing an undisciplined army, after having said with elegance:

"His forces seem'd no army, but a crowd
Heartless, unarm'd, disorderly, and loud,"

Book IV.

he gives them a fit of the ague.[44]

The allusions, however, are not always to vulgar things; he offends by exaggeration as much as by diminution:

"The king was plac'd alone, and o'er his head
A well-wrought heaven of silk and gold was spread."

Book II.

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[44] The quick contagion Fear ran swift through all,
And into trembling fits th' infected fall.

Whatever he writes is always polluted [45] with some conceit:

"Where the sun's fruitful beams give metals birth,
Where he the growth of fatal gold does see—
Gold, which alone more influence has than he."

Book I.

In one passage he starts a sudden question, to the confusion of philosophy:

"Ye learned heads, whom ivy garlands grace,
Why does that twining plant the oak embrace?
The oak for courtship most of all unfit,
And rough as are the winds that fight with it?"

Book II.

His expressions have sometimes a degree of meanness that surpasses expectation:

"Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now you're in,
The story of your gallant friend begin."

In a simile descriptive of the morning:

"As glimmering stars just at th' approach of day,
Cashier'd by troops, at last drop all away."

Book IV.

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention:

"He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,
That e'er the midday sun pierc'd through with light:
Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,
Wash'd from the morning beauties' deepest red;
An harmless flaming meteor shone for hair,
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care;
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,
Where the most sprightly azure pleas'd the eyes;
This he with starry vapours spangles all,
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe and fall;
Of a new rainbow ere it fret or fade,
The choicest piece took out, a scarf is made."

Book II.

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[45] This was a favourite word with Johnson. In 'Idler,' No. 82, he talks of polluting a canvas with deformity; in his 'Tour to the Hebrides,' of polluting the table with slices of cheese. In his 'Life of Pope' he says that Pope "polluted his will with female resentment;" and in his own will he bequeaths a soul to God, "polluted by many sins."

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery: what might in general expressions be great and forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by branching it into small parts. That Gabriel was invested with the softest or brightest colours of the sky, we might have been told, and been dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarf, and related it in the terms of the mercer and tailor.

Sometimes he indulges himself in a digression, always conceived with his natural exuberance, and commonly, even where it is not long, continued till it is tedious:

> "I' th' library a few choice authors stood,
> Yet 'twas well stor'd, for that small store was good;
> Writing, man's spiritual physic, was not then
> Itself, as now, grown a disease of men.
> Learning (young virgin) but few suitors knew;
> The common prostitute she lately grew,
> And with the spurious brood loads now the press;
> Laborious effects of idleness."

As the 'Davideis' affords only four books, though intended to consist of twelve,[46] there is no opportunity for such criticisms as epic poems commonly supply. The plan of the whole work is very imperfectly shown by the third part. The duration of an unfinished action cannot be known. Of characters, either not yet introduced, or shown but upon few occasions, the full extent and the nice discriminations cannot be ascertained. The fable is plainly implex, formed rather from the Odyssey than the Iliad: and many artifices of diversification are employed with the skill of a man acquainted with the best models. The past is recalled by narration, and the future anticipated by vision; but he has been so lavish of his poetical art that it is difficult to imagine how he could fill eight books more without practising again the same modes of disposing his matter; and perhaps the perception of this growing incumbrance inclined

[46] See note 43, p. 45.

him to stop. By this abruption posterity lost more instruction than delight. If the continuation of the 'Davideis' can be missed, it is for the learning that had been diffused over it, and the notes in which it had been explained.[47]

Had not his characters been depraved, like every other part, by improper decorations, they would have deserved uncommon praise. He gives Saul both the body and mind of a hero:

> "His way once chose, he forward thrust outright,
> Nor stepp'd aside for dangers or delight."

And the different beauties of the lofty Merah and the gentle Michol are very justly conceived and strongly painted.

Rymer has declared the 'Davideis' superior to the 'Jerusalem' of Tasso; "which," says he, "the poet, with all his care, has not totally purged from pedantry." If by pedantry is meant that minute knowledge which is derived from particular sciences and studies, in opposition to the general notions supplied by a wide survey of life and nature, Cowley certainly errs by introducing pedantry far more frequently than Tasso. I know not, indeed, why they should be compared; for the resemblance of Cowley's work to Tasso's is only that they both exhibit the agency of celestial and infernal spirits; in which, however, they differ widely, for Cowley supposes them commonly to operate upon the mind by suggestion; Tasso represents them as promoting or obstructing events by external agency.

Of particular passages that can be properly compared, I remember only the description of heaven, in which the different manner of the two writers is sufficiently discernible. Cowley's is scarcely description, unless it be possible to describe by negatives; for he tells us only what there is not in heaven. Tasso endeavours to represent the splendours and pleasures of the

[47] I intended to close all with that most poetical and excellent Elegy of David on the Death of Saul and Jonathan; for I had no mind to carry him quite on to his anointing at Hebron, because it is the custom of heroic poets (as we see by the examples of Homer and Virgil) never to come to the full end of their story, but only so near that every one may see it. This, I say, was the whole design, in which there are many noble and fertile arguments behind, as the barbarous cruelty of Saul to the priests at Nob, &c.—COWLEY: *Preface*, 1656.

regions of happiness. Tasso affords images; and Cowley sentiments. It happens, however, that Tasso's description affords some reason for Rymer's censure. He says of the Supreme Being:

> "Hà sotto i piedi e fato e la natura
> Ministri humili, e 'l moto, e ch' il misura."

The second line has in it more of pedantry than perhaps can be found in any other stanza of the poem.

In the perusal of the 'Davideis,' as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved; we are sometimes surprised, but never delighted, and find much to admire, but little to approve. Still, however, it is the work of Cowley—of a mind capacious by nature, and replenished by study.

In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetic, and rarely sublime; but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.

It is said by Denham in his elegy:

> "To him no author was unknown;
> Yet what he wrote was all his own."

This wide position requires less limitation when it is affirmed of Cowley than perhaps of any other poet: he read much, and yet borrowed little.

His character of writing was indeed not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise; and not sufficiently inquiring by what means the ancients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows.

He was in his own time considered as of unrivalled excellence. Clarendon represents him as having taken "a flight"

beyond all that went before him;[48] and Milton is said to have declared that the three greatest English poets were Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley.

His manner he had in common with others; but his sentiments were his own. Upon every subject he thought for himself; and such was his copiousness of knowledge that something at once remote and applicable rushed into his mind; yet it is not likely that he always rejected a commodious idea merely because another had used it: his known wealth was so great that he might have borrowed without loss of credit.

In his Elegy on Sir Henry Wotton, the last lines have such resemblance to the noble epigram of Grotius upon the death of Scaliger, that I cannot but think them copied from it, though they are copied by no servile hand.

One passage in his 'Mistress' is so apparently borrowed from Donne that he probably would not have written it had it not mingled with his own thoughts, so as that he did not perceive himself taking it from another:

"Although I think thou never found wilt be,
Yet I 'm resolv'd to search for thee;
The search itself rewards the pains.
So, though the chymic his great secret miss,
(For neither it in Art nor Nature is,)
Yet things well worth his toil he gains:
And does his charge and labour pay
With good unsought experiments by the way."

COWLEY: *Maidenhead.*

"Some that have deeper digg'd Love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie:
I have lov'd, and got, and told;
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery;
Oh, 'tis imposture all:
And as no chymic yet th' elixir got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot,
If by the way to him befal
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,
So lovers dream a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summer's night."

DONNE: *Love's Alchymy.*

[48] Clarendon's Life, ed. 1827, i. 34.

Jonson and Donne, as Dr. Hurd remarks, were then in the highest esteem.

It is related by Clarendon, that Cowley always acknowledges his obligation to the learning and industry of Jonson;[49] but I have found no traces of Jonson in his works: to emulate Donne appears to have been his purpose;[50] and from Donne he may have learned that familiarity with religious images, and that light allusion to sacred things, by which readers far short of sanctity are frequently offended; and which would not be borne in the present age, when devotion, perhaps not more fervent, is more delicate.

Having produced one passage taken by Cowley from Donne, I will recompense him by another which Milton seems to have borrowed from him.[51] He says of Goliah:

> "His spear, the trunk was of a lofty tree,
> Which Nature meant some tall ship's mast should be."
>
> *Davideis, Book III.*

Milton of Satan:

> "His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
> Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast
> Of some great ammiral, were but a wand,
> He walked with."

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[49] "The example and learning" are Clarendon's words.—*Life*, ed. 1827, p. 34.

[50] Cowley is a fine poet, in spite of all his faults. He as well as Davenant borrowed his metaphysical style from Donne.—POPE: *Spence by Singer*, p. 173.

He had other obligations to Donne. Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother:

> I saw him fling the stone, as if he meant
> At once his murther and his monument.
>
> *Davideis, Book I.*

The turn of this is from Donne:

> Swim in him swallowed dolphins without fear,
> And feel no sides, as if his vast womb were
> Some inland sea; and ever, as he went,
> He spouted rivers up, as if he meant
> To join our seas with seas above the firmament.
>
> *The Progress of the Soul.*

[51] I will recompense him in another way, by exhibiting the original of a well-known line:

> God made the country, and man made the town.—COWPER.
> God the first garden made, and the first city Cain.—COWLEY.

His diction was in his own time censured as negligent. He seems not to have known, or not to have considered, that words being arbitrary must owe their power to association, and have the influence, and that only, which custom has given them. Language is the dress of thought: and as the noblest mien or most graceful action would be degraded and obscured by a garb appropriated to the gross employments of rustics or mechanics, so the most heroic sentiments will lose their efficacy, and the most splendid ideas drop their magnificence, if they are conveyed by words used commonly upon low and trivial occasions, debased by vulgar mouths and contaminated by inelegant applications.

Truth indeed is always truth, and reason is always reason; they have an intrinsic and unalterable value, and constitute that intellectual gold which defies destruction: but gold may be so concealed in baser matter that only a chemist can recover it; sense may be so hidden in unrefined and plebeian words that none but philosophers can distinguish it; and both may be so buried in impurities as not to pay the cost of their extraction.

The diction, being the vehicle of the thoughts, first presents itself to the intellectual eye; and if the first appearance offends, a further knowledge is not often sought. Whatever professes to benefit by pleasing must please at once. The pleasures of the mind imply something sudden and unexpected; that which elevates must always surprise. What is perceived by slow degrees may gratify us with consciousness of improvement, but will never strike with the sense of pleasure.

Of all this Cowley appears to have been without knowledge, or without care. He makes no selection of words, nor seeks any neatness of phrase: he has no elegance, either lucky or elaborate; as his endeavours were rather to impress sentences upon the understanding than images on the fancy, he has few epithets, and those scattered without peculiar propriety of nice adaptation. It seems to follow from the necessity of the subject rather than the care of the writer, that the diction of his heroic poem is less familiar than that of his slightest writings.

He has given not the same numbers, but the same diction, to the gentle Anacreon and the tempestuous Pindar.

His versification seems to have had very little of his care; and if what he thinks be true, that his numbers are unmusical only when they are ill read, the art of reading them is at present lost; for they are commonly harsh to modern ears. He has indeed many noble lines, such as the feeble care of Waller never could produce. The bulk of his thoughts sometimes swelled his verse to unexpected and inevitable grandeur; but his excellence of this kind is merely fortuitous: he sinks willingly down to his general carelessness, and avoids with very little care either meanness or asperity.

His contractions are often rugged and harsh:

> "One flings a mountain, and its rivers too
> Torn up with 't."
>
> *Davideis, Book III.*

His rhymes are very often made by pronouns, or particles, or the like unimportant words, which disappoint the ear and destroy the energy of the line.

His combinations of different measures are sometimes dissonant and unpleasing; he joins verses together, of which the former does not slide easily into the latter.

The words *do* and *did*, which so much degrade in present estimation the line that admits them, were in the time of Cowley little censured or avoided: how often he used them, and with how bad an effect, at least to our ears, will appear by a passage in which every reader will lament to see just and noble thoughts defrauded of their praise by inelegance of language:

> "Where honour or where conscience *does* not bind,
> No other law shall shackle me;
> Slave to myself I will not be;
> Nor shall my future actions be confin'd
> By my own present mind.
> Who by resolves and vows engag'd *does* stand
> For days, that yet belong to fate,
> *Does* like an unthrift mortgage his estate,
> Before it falls into his hand,

The bondman of the cloister so,
All that he *does* receive *does* always owe.
And still as Time comes in, it goes away,
Not to enjoy, but debts to pay!
Unhappy slave, and pupil to a bell!
Which his hour's work as well as hours *does* tell:
Unhappy till the last, the kind releasing knell."

COWLEY. *Ode: Of Liberty.*

His heroic lines are often formed of monosyllables; but yet they are sometimes sweet and sonorous.

He says of the Messiah:

"Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall sound,
And reach to worlds that must not yet be found."

In another place, of David:

"Yet bid him go securely, when he sends;
'Tis Saul that is his foe, and we his friends.
The man who has his God, no aid can lack;
And we who bid him go, will bring him back."

Yet, amidst his negligence, he sometimes attempted an improved and scientific versification, of which it will be best to give his own account subjoined to this line:

"Nor can the glory contain itself in th' endless space."

Davideis, Book I.

"I am sorry that it is necessary to admonish the most part of readers that it is not by negligence that this verse is so loose, long, and, as it were, vast; it is to paint in the number the nature of the thing which it describes, which I would have observed in divers other places of this poem, that else will pass for very careless verses: as before:

"*And over-runs the neighb'ring fields with violent course.*"

In the second book:

"*Down a precipice deep, down he casts them all.*"

And:

"*And fell a-down his shoulders with loose care.*"

In the third:

> "*Brass was his helmet, his boots brass, and o'er*
> *His breast a thick plate of strong brass he wore.*"

In the fourth:

> "*Like some fair pine o'er-looking all th' ignobler wood.*"

And:

> "*Some from the rocks cast themselves down headlong.*"

And many more: but it is enough to instance in a few. The thing is, that the disposition of words and numbers should be such as that, out of the order and sound of them, the things themselves may be represented. This the Greeks were not so accurate as to bind themselves to; neither have our English poets observed it, for aught I can find. The Latins (*qui musas colunt severiores*) sometimes did it; and their prince, Virgil, always; in whom the examples are innumerable, and taken notice of by all judicious men, so that it is superfluous to collect them." [52]

I know not whether he has in many of these instances attained the representation or resemblance that he purposes. Verse can imitate only sound and motion. A *boundless* verse, a *headlong* verse, and a verse of *brass* or of *strong brass*, seem to comprise very incongruous and unsociable ideas. What there is peculiar in the sound of the line expressing *loose care* I cannot discover; nor why the *pine* is *taller* in an Alexandrine than in ten syllables.

But, not to defraud him of his due praise, he has given one example of representative versification which perhaps no other English line can equal:—

> "Begin, be bold, and venture to be wise:
> He who defers this work from day to day,
> Does on a river's bank expecting stay
> Till the whole stream which stopp'd him should be gone,
> *Which runs, and, as it runs, for ever will run on.*"

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[52] Poems, 1656, fol.—*Davideis*, p. 33.

Cowley was, I believe, the first poet that mingled Alexandrines at pleasure with the common heroic of ten syllables; and from him Dryden borrowed the practice, whether ornamental or licentious. He considered the verse of twelve syllables as elevated and majestic, and has therefore deviated into that measure when he supposes the voice heard of the Supreme Being.

The author of the 'Davideis' is commended by Dryden[53] for having written it in couplets, because he discovered that any staff was too lyrical for an heroic poem; but this seems to have been known before by May and Sandys, the translators of the 'Pharsalia' and the 'Metamorphoses.'

In the 'Davideis' are some hemistichs, or verses left imperfect by the author, in imitation of Virgil, whom he supposes not to have intended to complete them.[54] That this opinion is erroneous may be probably concluded, because this truncation is imitated by no subsequent Roman poet; because Virgil himself filled up one broken line in the heat of recitation; because in one the sense is now unfinished; and because all that can be done by a broken verse, a line intersected by a *cæsura*, and a full stop, will equally effect.[55]

Of triplets in his 'Davideis' he makes no use, and perhaps did not at first think them allowable; but he appears afterwards to have changed his mind, for in the verses on the government of Cromwell he inserts them liberally with great happiness.

[53] Dedication of Æneid, 1697.

[54] "Though none of the English poets, nor indeed of the ancient Latin, have imitated Virgil in leaving sometimes half verses (where the sense seems to invite a man to that liberty), yet his authority alone is sufficient, especially in a thing that looks so naturally and gracefully; and I am far from their opinion who think that Virgil himself intended to have filled up these broken hemistiques. There are some places in him which I dare almost swear have been made up since his death by the putid officiousness of some grammarians, as that of Dido—

——— Moriamur inultæ ?
Sed moriamur, ait. . . .

Here, I am confident, Virgil broke off."—COWLEY: *Poems*, 1656, fol.

[55] All these objections to Cowley's belief are urged by Dryden (in reply to Cowley) in his Dedication of the Æneid to the Marquis of Normanby.

After so much criticism on his poems, the Essays which accompany them must not be forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be applied to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought or hard-laboured; but all is easy without feebleness,[56] and familiar without grossness.[57]

It has been observed by Felton, in his Essay on the Classics,[58] that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted; and that he has rivalled the ancients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiastic fervour, that he brought to his poetic labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less; that he was equally qualified for sprightly sallies and for lofty flights; that he was among those who freed translation from servility, and, instead of following his

[56] "Cowley seems to have possessed the power of writing easily beyond any other of our poets; yet his pursuit of remote thoughts led him often into harshness of expression. Waller often attempted, but seldom attained it; for he is too frequently driven into transpositions."—JOHNSON: *Idler*, No. 77.

[57] Who now reads Cowley? If he pleases yet,
His moral pleases, not his pointed wit;
Forgot his epic, nay, Pindaric art;
But still I love the language of his heart.
POPE: *Epistle to Augustus.*

In all our comparisons of taste, I do not know whether I have ever heard your opinion of a poet very dear to me, the now out of fashion Cowley. Favour me with your judgment of him, and tell me if his prose essays, in particular, as well as no inconsiderable part of his verse, be not delicious. I prefer the graceful rambling of his essays even to the courtly elegance and ease of Addison; abstracting from this the latter's exquisite humour.—LAMB *to Coleridge*, Jan. 10, 1797.

[58] 'A Dissertation on reading the Classics, by Henry Felton, D.D., Rector of Whitwell in Derbyshire.' Third ed. 12mo. 1718, p. 26.

author at a distance, walked by his side; and that, if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise, from time to time, such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.[59]

[59] One of our late great poets is sunk in his reputation, because he could never forgive any conceit which came in his way; but swept, like a drag-net, great and small. There was plenty enough—but the dishes were ill sorted; whole pyramids of sweetmeats for boys and women, but little of solid meat for men. All this proceeded not from any want of knowledge, but of judgment. Neither did he want that in discerning the beauties and faults of other poets, but only indulged himself in the luxury of writing; and perhaps knew it was a fault, and hoped the reader would not find it. For this reason, though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer; and for ten impressions which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelvemonth; for, as my Lord Rochester said, though somewhat profanely, Not being of God, he could not stand."—DRYDEN: *Preface to Fables*, 1700.

The fourth edition of Cowley's works appeared in folio in 1674; the fifth in folio, 1678; the sixth in 1680, fol.; the seventh in 1681; the eighth in 1684; the ninth in 1700, fol. (the year in which this was written by Dryden); and the eleventh in 1709, 2 vols. 8vo.

COWLEY'S WILL.

The will (occupying two sides of a foolscap sheet of paper) is preserved in the Prerogative Will Office of the Court of Canterbury, and was proved by Thomas Cowley, the poet's brother, on the 31st August, 1667, and first printed (by the present Editor) in 'The Shakespeare Society's Papers.'

TESTAMENT.[60]

"In the name of God Almighty, to whom bee for ever all glory, Amen. I, Abraham Cowley, of Chertsea, in the county of Surrey, beeing at present by God's mercy in perfect health and understanding, and well considering the uncertainty of human life, most especially in these tymes of sicknes and mortality, doe, in attendance of God's blessed pleasure concerning my life or death, make and declare this my last Will and Testament as followeth. I humbly recommend my soule to that greate God from whom I had it, beseeching him to receive it into his bosome for the merits of his sonne, the saviour of sinners, amongst whome I am one of the greatest, and my body to the earth, from whence it came, in hopes of a happy resurrection. O Lord, I believe, help my unbelief; O Lord, I repent, pardon the weakness of my repentance.

"All my worldly goods, moneys, and chattels, I bequeath to my brother Thomas Cowley,[61] whome I doe hereby constitute my sole heyr and executor, hee paying out of y^t^ estate, w^ch^ it has pleased God to bestowe upon me, much above my deserts, these ensueing Legacies.

"I leave to my neveu —— Cowley (if hee bee yet alive) ten pounds; To my cosen Beniamin Hind, towards his education in learning, fivety pounds; To my cosen —— Gauton, of Nutfield, in Surrey, for y^e^ same use of his eldest sonne, fivety pounds; To my cosen Mary Gauton, twenty pounds; To Thomas Fotherby, of Canterbury, Esquire,[62] one hundred pounds, w^ch^ [I] beseech him to accept of as a small remembrance of his

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[60] This is the endorsement in Cowley's handwriting.

[61] For his three brothers he always maintained a constant affection: and having survived the two first, he made the third his heir.—Sprat's *Life of Cowley, in a Letter to Martin Clifford.* Thomas is the youngest of the children named in the will of the poet's father.

His brother lived in the King's Yard, *i. e.*, the King's Arms Yard in the city.—*Letter from Cowley to Evelyn, Chertsey, May* 13, 1667.

[62] Uncle of Martin Clifford of the Charter House. Cowley acquired his friendship at Trinity College, Cambridge. "This brought him into the love and esteem of the most eminent members of that famous society, and principally of your uncle, Mr. Fotherby, whose favours he since abundantly acknowledged, when his benefactor had quite forgot the obligation."—Sprat's *Life of Cowley.*

ancient kindness to mee; To Sir Will Davenant, twenty pounds; To Mr. Mart Clifford,[63] twenty pounds; To Mr. Thomas Sprat, twenty pounds; To Mr. Thomas Cook, twenty pounds; To Dr. Charles Scarburgh, twenty pounds; To Dr. Thomas Croyden, twenty pounds; To my mayd, Mary (besides what I ow her, and all my wearing linen), twenty pounds; To my servant, Thomas Waldron, ten pounds and most of my wearing clothes at my brother's choise; To Mary, my brother's mayd, five pounds; To the poore of the town of Chertsea, twenty pounds.

"I doe farther leave to the Honourable John Hervey,[65] of Ickworth, Esquire, my share and interest in his Highnes the Duke of York's Theater.[66] And to y^e^ Right Hon^ble^ the Earl of S^t^ Albans, my Lord, and once kind Master, a Ring of ten pounds, onely in memory of my duty and affection to him, not being able to give anything worthy his acceptance, nor hee (God bee praised) in need of any gifts from such persons as I.

"If anything bee due to mee from Trinity College [Cambridge], I leave it to bee bestowed in books upon y^t^ library; and I leave besides to Doctor Robert Crane, Fellowe of y^e^ said College, a Ring of five pounds valew, as a small token of o^r^ freindship.

"I desire my dear friend, M^r^ Thomas Sprat, to trouble himselfe w^th^ y^e^ collection and revision of all such writings of mine (whether printed before or not) as hee shall thinke fit to be published, Beseeching him not to let any passe which hee shall judge unworthy of the name of his friend, and most

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[63] Of Martin Clifford, usually called Mat Clifford, little is known. Wood mentions, in his manuscript additions to his own copy of the Athenæ Oxonienses, that he was a lieutenant in Thomas Earl of Ossory's regiment, in 1660; for which he quotes Merc. Pub., p. 510. He was elected from Westminster to Trinity College, Cambridge, made Master of the Charter House 17th Nov., 1671, and died 10th Dec., 1677.—MALONE'S *Life of Dryden*, p. 95.

He is said to have had a hand in 'The Rehearsal,' performed for the first time on the 7th Dec. 1671; and to have been the author of 'Four Letters' on Dryden's Poems, printed in 4to., 1687, ten years after his death. The last letter is dated Charter House, July 1, 1672.

[64] He (Mr. Cowley) told me the last time that ever I saw him . . of which his friend Mr. Cook is a witness.—SPRAT'S *Life of Cowley*.

[65] John Hervey, of Ickworth, Treasurer of the Household to Catherine, queen of Charles II., ob. 18th Jan., 1679-80. "The first occasion of his entering into business was the elegy that he wrote on Mr. Hervey's death. This brought him into the acquaintance of Mr. John Hervey, the brother of his deceased friend; from whom he received many offices of kindness through the whole course of his life, and principally this, that by his means he came into the service of my Lord St. Alban's."—SPRAT'S *Life of Cowley*.

Mr. Hervey's mother was Susan Jermyn, daughter of Sir Robert Jermyn, of Rushbrook, grandfather to Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Alban's. Ickworth and Rushbrook are in Suffolk, near Bury St. Edmunds. In a damp gallery at Ickworth I saw in 1852 a highly interesting but sadly neglected portrait of Cowley's friend Hervey.

[66] Cowley's comedy, 'Cutter of Coleman Street,' was first acted at the Duke's theatre. Sir William Davenant was the patentee of the theatre.

especially nothing (if anything of y^t^ kind have escaped my pen) w^ch^ may give the least offence in point of religion or good manners. And in consideration of this unpleasant task, I desire him to accept of my Study of Books.[67]

"This I declare to bee my last Will and Testament. Lord have mercy upon my soul. Written by my own hand, signed and sealed, at Chertsea, this 28th day of September, 1665.

"ABRAHAM COWLEY.

Signed and sealed in
the presence of
"*Thomas Waldron.*[68]

"The mark of ‡ *John Symonds*,
Wheelwright, of Chertsey."

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[67] Mr. Cowley in his will recommended to my care the revising of all his works that were formerly printed, and the collecting of those papers which he had designed for the press. And he did it with this particular obligation, *That I should be sure to let nothing pass that might seem the least offence to religion or good manners.* A caution which you [Martin Clifford] will judge to have been altogether needless. For certainly, in all ancient or modern times, there can scarce any author be found that has handled so many different matters in such various sorts of style, who less wants the correction of his friends, or has less reason to fear the severity of strangers.—SPRAT'S *Life of Cowley*, 1669.

[68] The poet's man-servant. See the body of the will.

Let me add here that Cowley did not excel in conversation, and that only one of his sayings has been preserved. "Pray, Mr. Howard, if you did read your grammar, what harm would it do you?" This was to Ned Howard. (*See* Pope's 'Letter to a Noble Lord.')

SIR JOHN DENHAM.

DENHAM.

1615–1668.

Born at Dublin — Educated at Oxford and Lincoln's Inn — Addicted to Gaming — Becomes unexpectedly a Poet — Sides with Charles I. — Writes 'Cooper's Hill' — Employed by Charles I. — Made Knight of the Bath and Surveyor of the Works — His two Wives — Becomes Insane—Death and Burial in Westminster Abbey—Character and Works.

Of Sir John Denham very little is known but what is related of him by Wood, or by himself.

He was born at Dublin in 1615; the only son of Sir John Denham, of Little Horsely in Essex, then chief baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, and of Eleanor, daughter of Sir Garret More, baron of Mellefont.[1]

Two years afterwards, his father, being made [July 1617] one of the barons of the Exchequer in England, brought him away from his native country, and educated him in London.

In 1631 he was sent to [Trinity College] Oxford, where he was considered "as a dreaming young man, given more to cards and dice than study," and therefore gave no prognostics of his future eminence—nor was suspected to conceal, under sluggishness and laxity, a genius born to improve the literature of his country.

When he was, three years afterwards, removed to Lincoln's Inn, he prosecuted the common law with sufficient appearance of application, yet did not lose his propensity to cards and dice; but was very often plundered by gamesters.

Being severely reproved for this folly, he professed, and perhaps believed, himself reclaimed; and, to testify the sin-

[1] She was his second wife. His first wife was the widow of Richard Kellefet of Egham, chief groom in Queen Elizabeth's 'removing gardrobe of beddes' and 'yeoman of Her Majesty's standing gardrobe at Richmond.'

cerity of his repentance, wrote and published 'An Essay upon Gaming.'[2]

He seems to have divided his studies between law and poetry; for, in 1636, he translated the second book of the Æneid.

Two years after, his father died,[3] and then, notwithstanding his resolutions and professions, he returned again to the vice of gaming, and lost several thousand pounds that had been left him.

In 1642 he published 'The Sophy.' This seems to have given him his first hold of the public attention; for Waller remarked, "that he broke out like the Irish rebellion three score thousand strong when nobody was aware, or in the least suspected it"[4]—an observation which could have had no propriety had his poetical abilities been known before.

He was after that pricked for sheriff of Surrey, and made [1642] governor of Farnham Castle for the King; but he soon resigned that charge, and retreated to Oxford, where, in 1643, he published 'Cooper's Hill.'[5]

This poem had such reputation as to excite the common artifice by which envy degrades excellence. A report was spread that the performance was not his own, but that he had bought it of a vicar for forty pounds. The same attempt was made to rob Addison of his 'Cato,' and Pope of his 'Essay on Criticism.'

In 1647 the distresses of the royal family required him to

[2] The Anatomy of Play, written by a worthy and learned Gent. Dedicated to his father, to show his detestation of it. London, 1645, sm. 8vo.

He would game extremely; when he had played away all his money he would play away his father's wrought caps with gold.—AUBREY'S *Lives*.

[3] His father died 6th January, 1638-9, having made his will in March, 1637, wherein he commends "his son John Denham, Esq., his wife and child to the blessing of Almighty God." His estate he left "wholly and freely" to his son. He is buried at Egham, in Surrey, where his monument with his effigy in a winding-sheet is still to be seen.

[4] So Aubrey. Dryden in his Preface to Walsh's Dialogue (1691) refers to the remark as said of Waller's appearance "by the wits of the last age."

[5] There is an edition of 'Cooper's Hill' in 4to., dated London, 1642. The first genuine edition is that in 4to., 1655. 'Cooper's Hill written in the year 1640. Now printed from a perfect copy and a corrected impression by John Denham, Esq.' London, Moseley, 1655.

engage in more dangerous employments.[6] He was entrusted by the Queen with a message to the King; and, by whatever means, so far softened the ferocity of Hugh Peters, that by his intercession admission was procured. Of the King's condescension he has given an account in the dedication of his works.[7]

He was afterwards employed in carrying on the King's correspondence, and, as he says, discharged this office with great safety to the royalists; and being accidentally discovered by the adverse party's knowledge of Mr. Cowley's hand, he escaped, happily both for himself and his friends.

He was yet engaged in a greater undertaking. In April 1648 he conveyed James the Duke of York from London into France, and delivered him there to the Queen and Prince of Wales. This year he published his translation of 'Cato Major.'

He now resided in France, as one of the followers of the exiled King; and, to divert the melancholy of their condition, was sometimes enjoined by his master to write occasional verses, one of which amusements was probably his ode or song upon the Embassy to Poland, by which he and Lord Crofts procured a contribution of ten thousand pounds from the Scotch that wandered over that kingdom. Poland was at that time very much frequented by itinerant traders, who, in a country of very little commerce and of great extent, where every man resided on his own estate, contributed very much to the accommodation of life, by bringing to every man's house those little necessaries which it was very inconvenient to want, and very troublesome to fetch. I have formerly read, without much reflection, of the multitude of Scotchmen that travelled with their wares in Poland; and that their numbers were not small, the success of this negotiation gives sufficient evidence.[8]

[6] In the time of the Civil Wars George Withers, the poet, begged Sir John Denham's estate of the Parliament, in whose cause he was a captain of horse. It [happened] that G. W. was taken prisoner, and was in danger of his life, having written severely against the King, &c. Sir John Denham went to the King, and desired his Majesty not to hang him, for that whilst G. W. lived he should not be the worst poet in England.—AUBREY'S *Lives*.

[7] To Charles II., in 8vo., 1668.

[8] *See* Arthur Wilson's 'James I.,' fol., 1653, p. 34; Lord Bacon's Speech 'of General Naturalisation;' and 'Notes and Queries,' vii. 600.

About this time what estate the war and the gamesters had left him was sold by order of the Parliament; and when, in 1652, he returned to England, he was entertained by the Earl of Pembroke.[9]

Of the next years of his life there is no account. At the Restoration he obtained that which many missed, the reward of his loyalty, being made surveyor of the King's buildings,[10] and dignified with the order of the Bath. He seems now to have learned some attention to money; for Wood says that he got by this place seven thousand pounds.[11]

After the Restoration he wrote the poem on 'Prudence and Justice,' and perhaps some of his other pieces; and as he appears, whenever any serious question comes before him, to have been a man of piety, he consecrated his poetical powers to religion, and made a metrical version of the Psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed; but in sacred poetry who has succeeded?

It might be hoped that the favour of his master and esteem of the public would now make him happy. But human felicity

[9] A'o 1652 he returned into England, and being in some straights, was kindly entertained by the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton, where I had the honour to contract an acquaintance with him. He was, as I remember, a year with my Lord of Pembroke at Wilton and London; he had then sold all the lands his father had left him.—AUBREY's *Lives*.

[10] Patent dated 13th June, 1660.

[11] He [Charles I.] granted him the reversion of the surveyor of his buildings after the decease of Mr. Inigo Jones, which place, after the restoration of King Charles II., he enjoyed to his death, and got 7000*l*., as Sir Christopher Wren told me of, to his own knowledge. Sir Christopher Wren was his deputie.—AUBREY's *Lives*.

Some of Denham's books of accounts as surveyor are among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum. Butler accuses him of falsifying his returns.

> Beside, you never overreach'd the King
> One farthing, all the while, in reckoning;
> Nor brought in false accompt, with little tricks
> Of passing broken rubbish for whole bricks;
> False mustering of workmen by the day,
> Deduction out of wages, and dead pay
> For those that never liv'd, all which did come
> By thrifty management to no small sum.

Let us hope that there is more malignity than truth in this.

is short and uncertain; a second marriage[12] brought upon him so much disquiet as for a time disordered his understanding;[13] and Butler lampooned him for his lunacy. I know not whether the malignant lines were then made public, nor what provocation incited Butler to do that which no provocation can excuse.

His frenzy lasted not long;[14] and he seems to have regained his full force of mind; for he wrote afterwards his excellent poem upon the death of Cowley, whom he was not long to sur-

[12] His first wife was the daughter and heire of —— Cotton, of —— in Gloucestershire, by whom he had 500*l.* per annum, one son and two daughters. His son did not *patrem sapere*. He was of Wadham College in Dr. Wilkins's time; he died *sine prole*. One of his daughters is married to —— Morley of Sussex, Esq., the other . . . .—AUBREY'S *Lives*.

1634, June 25. John Denham, gent., and Ann Cotton, by licence from Sir Edmund Scott's office.—*Marriage Register of St. Bride's, Fleet-street.*

[13] He was married in Westminster Abbey, on the 25th of May, 1665, to Margaret Brooke, daughter of Sir William Brooke, K.B., and niece of Digby Earl of Bristol. She had been the mistress of the Duke of York (afterwards James II.), and continued her guilty connexion after her marriage to Denham.

10th June, 1666.—He [Pearse the surgeon] tells me further how the Duke of York is wholly given up to his new mistress, my Lady Denham, going at noon-day with all his gentlemen with him to visit her in Scotland Yard [where Denham lived as surveyor]; she declaring she will not be his mistress, as Mrs. Price, to go up and down the Privy Stairs, but will be owned publicly, and so she is. Mr. Brouncker, it seems, was the pimp to bring it about, and my Lady Castlemaine, who designs thereby to fortify herself by the Duke, there being a falling out the other day between the King and her.—PEPYS.

Lady Denham died, 6th January, 1666-7, not without suspicion of poison administered by her husband. Her body, as we learn from a letter of Lord Orrery's, was opened at her own desire, "and no sign of poison found." (Orrery State Papers, fol., 1742, p. 219.) Butler, in his bitter panegyric, is silent on the supposed share the poet was said by some to have had in the hurried and mysterious death of his wife: and his silence is much in Denham's favour. There is a fine portrait of Lady Denham by Lely at Hampton Court.

[14] He has unintentionally described his own state at this time in a couplet on Cowley's death:

> As rigid husbands jealous are
> When they believe their wives too fair.

"Sir John's distemper of madness first appeared when he went from London to see the famous free-stone quarries at Portland, in Dorset. When he came within a mile of it [he] turned back to London again, and would not see it; he went to Hounslow and demanded rents of lands he had sold many years before—went to the King and told him he was the Holy Ghost."—AUBREY'S *Lives*.

vive; for on the 19th of March, 1668, he was buried by his side.[15]

Denham is deservedly considered as one of the fathers of English poetry. "Denham and Waller," says Prior, "improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it."[16] He has given specimens of various composition, descriptive, ludicrous, didactic, and sublime.

He appears to have had, in common with almost all mankind, the ambition of being upon proper occasions *a merry fellow*, and, in common with most of them, to have been by nature, or by early habits, debarred from it. Nothing is less exhilarating than the ludicrousness of Denham: he does not fail for want of efforts; he is familiar, he is gross, but he is never merry, unless the "Speech against Peace in the close Committee" be excepted. For grave burlesque, however, his imitation of Davenant shows him to have been well qualified.

Of his more elevated occasional poems there is perhaps none that does not deserve commendation. In the verses to Fletcher we have an image that has since been adopted:

> "But whither am I stray'd? I need not raise
> Trophies to thee from other men's dispraise;
> Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,
> Nor need thy juster title the foul guilt
> Of eastern kings, who, to secure their reign,
> Must have their brothers, sons, and kindred slain."

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[15] Denham died 19th March, 1668-9, and was buried on the 23rd in Westminster Abbey, beneath a nameless stone. His poem on Cowley's death was published in Aug. 1667.

He delighted much in bowls, and did bowl very well. He was of the tallest, but a little incurvetting at his shoulders, not very robust. His hair was but thin and flaxen, with a moist colour. His gait was slow and was rather a stalking (he had long legges). His eye was a kind of light goose gray, not big, but it had a strange piercingness. He was generally temperate as to drinking.—AUBREY'S *Lives*.

[16] Prior does not mention Denham. "Heroic with continued rhyme, as Donne and his contemporaries used it, carrying the sense of the verse most commonly into the other, was found too dissolute and wild, and came very often too near prose. As Davenant and Waller corrected and Dryden perfected it, it is too confined."—PRIOR: *Preface to Solomon*.

After Denham, Orrery, in one of his prologues,

> "Poets are sultans, if they had their will;
> For every author would his brother kill."

And Pope,

> "Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
> Bear like the Turk no brother near the throne."

But this is not the best of his little pieces; it is excelled by his poem to Fanshaw, and his elegy on Cowley.

His praise of Fanshaw's version of 'Guarini' contains a very sprightly and judicious character of a good translator:—

> "That servile path thou nobly dost decline,
> Of tracing word by word, and line by line.
> Those are the labour'd births of slavish brains,
> Not the effect of poetry, but pains;
> Cheap vulgar arts, whose narrowness affords
> No flight for thoughts, but poorly stick at words.
> A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,
> To make translations and translators too.[17]
> They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame,
> True to his sense, but truer to his fame."

The excellence of these lines is greater, as the truth which they contain was not at that time generally known.

His poem on the death of Cowley was his last, and, among his shorter works, his best performance: the numbers are musical, and the thoughts are just.

'Cooper's Hill' is the work that confers upon him the rank and dignity of an original author. He seems to have been, at least among us, the author of a species of composition that may be denominated *local poetry*, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape, to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection or incidental meditation.

To trace a new scheme of poetry has in itself a very high claim to praise, and its praise is yet more when it is apparently

[17] Copied by Dryden:—

> When these translate and teach translators too.
> *Epistle to the Earl of Roscommon*, 1684.

copied by Garth and Pope, after whose names little will be gained by an enumeration of smaller poets, that have left scarcely a corner of the island not dignified either by rhyme or blank verse.[18]

'Cooper's Hill,' if it be maliciously inspected, will not be found without its faults. The digressions are too long, the morality too frequent, and the sentiments sometimes such as will not bear a rigorous inquiry.

The four verses which, since Dryden has commended them, almost every writer for a century past has imitated, are generally known:

> "O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
> My great example, as it is my theme!
> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'er-flowing full." [19]

The lines are in themselves not perfect; for most of the words, thus artfully opposed, are to be understood simply on one side of the comparison, and metaphorically on the other; and if there be any language which does not express intellectual operations by material images, into that language they cannot be translated. But so much meaning is comprised in few words; the particulars of resemblance are so perspicaciously

[18] Of this species of local poetry we have Waller's 'St. James's Park,' Pope's 'Windsor Forest,' Garth's 'Claremont,' Tickell's 'Kensington Gardens,' Dyer's 'Grongar Hill,' Jago's 'Edge Hill,' Scott's 'Amwell,' Bruce's 'Lochleven,' Crowe's 'Lewisdon Hill,' and Kirke White's 'Clifton Grove.'

[19] "I am sure there are few who make verses have observed the sweetness of these two lines in 'Cooper's Hill:'

> Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
> Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.

And there are yet fewer who can find the reason of that sweetness. I have given it to some of my friends in conversation, and they have allowed the criticism to be just."—DRYDEN: *Ded. of Æneid.* 1697.

> If Anna's happy reign you praise,
> Pray, not a word of "halcyon days:"
> Nor let my votaries show their skill
> In aping lines from Cooper's Hill;
> For know I cannot bear to hear
> The mimicry of "deep, yet clear."
>
> SWIFT: *Apollo's Edict.*

collected, and every mode of excellence separated from its adjacent fault by so nice a line of limitation; the different parts of the sentence are so accurately adjusted, and the flow of the last couplet is so smooth and sweet, that the passage, however celebrated, has not been praised above its merit. It has beauty peculiar to itself, and must be numbered among those felicities which cannot be produced at will by wit and labour, but must arise unexpectedly in some hour propitious to poetry.

He appears to have been one of the first that understood the necessity of emancipating translation from the drudgery of counting lines and interpreting single words. How much this servile practice obscured the clearest and deformed the most beautiful parts of the ancient authors, may be discovered by a perusal of our earlier versions, some of them the works of men well qualified, not only by critical knowledge, but by poetical genius, who yet, by a mistaken ambition of exactness, degraded at once their originals and themselves.

Denham saw the better way, but has not pursued it with great success. His versions of Virgil are not pleasing; but they taught Dryden to please better. His poetical imitation of Tully on 'Old Age' has neither the clearness of prose, nor the sprightliness of poetry.

The "strength of Denham,"[20] which Pope so emphatically mentions, is to be found in many lines and couplets, which convey much meaning in few words, and exhibit the sentiment with more weight than bulk.

On the Thames.

"Though with those streams he no resemblance hold,
Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold;
His genuine and less guilty wealth t' explore,
Search not his bottom, but survey his shore."[21]

[20] And praise the easy vigour of a line
Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join.
POPE: *Essay on Criticism.*

[21] Originally:
And tho' his clearer sand no golden veins
Like Tagus' or Pactolus' stream contains—
His genuine and less guilty wealth to explore,
Search not his bottom, but behold his shore.

On Strafford.

"His wisdom such, as once it did appear
Three kingdoms' wonder, and three kingdoms' fear.
While single he stood forth, and seem'd, although
Each had an army, as an equal foe,
Such was his force of eloquence, to make
The hearers more concern'd than he that spake:
Each seem'd to act that part he came to see,
And none was more a looker-on than he;
So did he move our passions, some were known
To wish, for the defence, the crime their own.
Now private pity strove with public hate,
Reason with rage, and eloquence with fate."

On Cowley.

"To him no author was unknown,
Yet what he wrote was all his own;
Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate!
And when he would like them appear,
Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear."

As one of Denham's principal claims to the regard of posterity arises from his improvement of our numbers, his versification ought to be considered. It will afford that pleasure which arises from the observation of a man of judgment, naturally right, forsaking bad copies by degrees, and advancing towards a better practice as he gains more confidence in himself.

In his translation of Virgil, written when he was about twenty-one years old, may be still found the old manner of continuing the sense ungracefully from verse to verse.

"Then all those
Who in the dark our fury did escape,
Returning, know our borrow'd arms, and shape,
And differing dialect: then their numbers swell
And grow upon us: first Chorœbeus fell
Before Minerva's altar; next did bleed
Just Ripheus, whom no Trojan did exceed
In virtue, yet the gods his fate decreed.
Then Hypanis and Dymas, wounded by
Their friends; nor thee, Pantheus, thy piety,

Nor consecrated mitre, from the same
Ill fate could save; my country's funeral flame
And Troy's cold ashes I attest, and call
To witness for myself, that in their fall
No foes, or death, nor danger I declin'd,
Did and deserv'd no less, my fate to find."

From this kind of concatenated metre he afterwards refrained, and taught his followers the art of concluding their sense in couplets, which has perhaps been with rather too much constancy pursued.

This passage exhibits one of those triplets which are not infrequent in this first essay, but which it is to be supposed his maturer judgment disapproved, since in his latter works he has totally forborne them.

His rhymes are such as seem found without difficulty by following the sense, and are for the most part as exact at least as those of other poets, though now and then the reader is shifted off with what he can get.

"O how *transform'd!*
How much unlike that Hector who *return'd*
Clad in Achilles' spoils!"

And again—

"From thence a thousand lesser poets *sprung*
Like petty princes from the fall of *Rome*."

Sometimes the weight of rhyme is laid upon a word too feeble to sustain it:

"Troy confounded falls
From all her glories: if it might have stood
By any power, by this right hand it *shou'd*.
—And though my outward state misfortune *hath*
Deprest thus low, it cannot reach my faith."

"—Thus, by his fraud and our own faith o'ercome,
A feigned tear destroys us, against *whom*
Tydides nor Achilles could prevail,
Nor ten years' conflict, nor a thousand sail."

He is not very careful to vary the ends of his verses: in one passage the word *die* rhymes three couplets in six.

Most of these petty faults are in his first productions, when he was less skilful, or at least less dexterous in the use of words; and though they had been more frequent, they could only have lessened the grace, not the strength of his composition. He is one of the writers that improved our taste, and advanced our language, and whom we ought therefore to read with gratitude, though, having done much, he left much to do.[22]

[22] There is no one of our poets of that class [holiday-writers] that was more judicious than Sir John Denham.—POPE: *Spence by Singer*, p. 281.

This poem [Cooper's Hill] was first printed without the author's name in 1643. In that edition a great number of verses are to be found, since entirely omitted, and very many others since corrected and improved. Some few the author afterwards added; and in particular the four celebrated lines on the Thames:

O could I flow like thee, &c.

All with admirable judgment, and the whole read together is a very strong proof of what Mr. Waller says:

Poets lose half the praise they should have got,
Could it be known what they discreetly blot.

POPE (Note in his copy of Denham):
Spence by Singer, p. 281.

JOHN MILTON.

MILTON.

1608–1674.

Born in London — Educated at St. Paul's and at Cambridge — Writes 'Comus' and 'Lycidas' — Visits Italy — Sees Grotius and Galileo — Returns to London — His 'School' — Marries — Publishes his Poems — Writes on Divorce — Sides with the Parliament against Charles I. — Made Secretary of the Latin Tongue to the Parliament and Cromwell — Prints a Reply to Salmasius — Becomes Blind — Loses his Secretaryship — Is in Danger at the Restoration — Receives a Pardon — Publishes 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' — His Three Wives — His Children and Nephews — Dies in London, and is buried in St. Giles', Cripplegate — His Works and Character.

The Life of Milton has been already written in so many forms, and with such minute inquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myself with the addition of a few notes to Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgment, but that a new narrative was thought necessary to the uniformity of this edition.

John Milton was by birth a gentleman, descended from the proprietors of Milton, near Thame, in Oxfordshire, one of whom forfeited his estate in the times of York and Lancaster. Which side he took I know not: his descendant inherited no veneration for the White Rose.

His grandfather, John [Richard ?], was keeper[1] of the forest of Shotover, a zealous papist, who disinherited his son because he had forsaken the religion of his ancestors.

His father, John, who was the son disinherited, had recourse for his support to the profession of a scrivener. He was a man eminent for his skill in music (many of his compositions being still to be found[2]), and his reputation in his profession was such

[1] Under-ranger only. When Milton's grandfather lived, the office of keeper was held almost invariably by a nobleman. The grandfather lived at Halton, five miles east of Oxford, as Aubrey had heard, or rather of Stanton St. John, as Mr. Hunter's researches would lead us to believe (*Milton: A Sheaf of Gleanings*, 1850, p. 5).

[2] Milton's father has a madrigal for six voices among the numerous contri-

that he grew rich and retired to an estate. He had probably more than common literature, as his son addresses him in one of his most elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caston, a Welsh family, by whom he had two sons, John, the poet, and Christopher, who studied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the King's party, for which he was awhile persecuted, but having, by his brother's interest, obtained permission to live in quiet, he supported himself so honourably by chamber-practice that soon after the accession of King James he was knighted and made a judge; but his constitution being too weak for business, he retired before any disreputable compliances became necessary.[3]

He had likewise a daughter, Anne, whom he married, with a considerable fortune, to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewsbury, and rose in the Crown Office to be secondary: by him she had two sons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentic account of his domestic manners.[4]

John, the poet, was born in his father's house, at the Spread Eagle in Bread Street, December 9, 1608, between six and seven in the morning. His father appears to have been very solicitous about his education; for he was instructed at first by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young,[5] who was

butions of the most capital performers, in *The Triumphs of Oriana* (that is Queen Elizabeth), published by Morley in 1601. See Rimbault's 'Bibliotheca Madrigaliana,' 8vo., 1847, p. 15.

[3] One of the new judges was Christopher Milton, younger brother of the great poet. Of Christopher little is known, except that in the time of the Civil War he had been a Royalist, and that he now in his old age leaned towards Popery. It does not appear that he was ever formally reconciled to the church of Rome, but he certainly had scruples about communicating with the church of England, and had therefore a strong interest in supporting the dispensing power.—MACAULAY'S *Hist.*, ii. 82, 9th ed.

[4] Edward was the elder, and it is from him alone that any authentic account of his domestic manners has been derived. Edward Philips's 'Life of Mr. John Milton' was prefixed to his 'Letters of State,' 12mo., 1694.

[5] Young, a Scot by birth, and a rigid and zealous puritan. He was one of the authors of the book called *Smectymnuus*, defended by Milton; was admitted Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, by the Earl of Manchester in person, 12th April, 1644, but afterwards ejected for refusing the engagement. He died Vicar of Stowmarket, in Suffolk, and was buried there.

afterwards chaplain to the English merchants at Hamburg, and of whom we have reason to think well, since his scholar considered him as worthy of an epistolary elegy.

He was then sent to St. Paul's School, under the care of Mr. Gill,[6] and removed, in the beginning of his sixteenth year, to Christ's College in Cambridge, where he entered a sizar,[7] February 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently skilled in the Latin tongue; and he himself, by annexing the dates to his first compositions—a boast of which Politian had given him an example—seems to commend the earliness of his own proficiency to the notice of posterity. But the products of his vernal fertility have been surpassed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an estimate: many have excelled Milton in their first essays who never rose to works like 'Paradise Lost.'

At fifteen, a date which he uses till he is sixteen, he translated or versified two Psalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the public eye; but they raise no great expectations; they would in any numerous school have obtained praise, but not excited wonder.

Many of his elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice discernment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, remark, what I think is true, that Milton was the first Englishman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classic elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few.[8] Haddon and

[6] Alexander Gill of Trinity College, Oxford, made usher of St. Paul's School about the year 1619, and appointed Master at his father's death in 1635. Died 1642. (Warton's 'Milton,' 2nd ed., p. 419.)

[7] Milton was admitted a pensioner, and not a sizar: "Johannes Milton Londinensis, filius Johannis, institutus fuit in Literarum elementis sub Mag'ro Gill Gymnasii Paulini Præfecto, et admissus est *Pensionarius Minor* Feb. 12°, 1624, sub M'ro Chappell, solvitq. pro Ingr. £.0 10*s.* 8*d.*"—*Register of Christ's College, Cambridge.*

Pensionarius Minor is a *Pensioner*, or Commoner, in contradistinction to a Fellow-Commoner.—T. Warton: *Milton's Poems*, p. 423.

[8] "But we must at least except some of the hendecasyllables and epigrams

Ascham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they have succeeded in prose, no sooner attempt verses than they provoke derision. If we produced anything worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps Alabaster's 'Roxana.'[9]

Of these exercises, which the rules of the University required, some were published by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded; for they were such as few can form: yet there is reason to suspect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondness. That he obtained no fellowship is certain; but the unkindness with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am ashamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was one of the last students in either university that suffered the public indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controversial hostility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he steadily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it seems plain from his own verses to Deodati that he had incurred *rustication*—a temporary dismission into the country, with perhaps the loss of a term.

> "Me tenet urbs refluâ quam Thamesis alluit undâ,
> Meque nec invitum patria dulcis habet.
> Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura revisere Camum,
> Nec dudum *vetiti* me *laris* angit amor.—
> . . . . . .
> Nec duri libet usque minas perferre magistri,
> Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo.[10]
> Si sit hoc *exilium* patrias adiisse penates,
> Et vacuum curis otia grata sequi,
> Non ego vel *profugi* nomen sortemve recuso,
> Lætus et *exilii* conditione fruor."

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindness and

of Leland, one of our first literary reformers, from this hasty decision."—T. Warton: *Milton's Minor Poems*, 2nd ed., p. xvi.

[9] Published 1632. "Whoever but slightly examines it will find it written in the style and manner of the turgid and unnatural Seneca."—Joseph Warton: *Milton's Minor Poems*, p. 430.

[10] The line—

> Cæteraque ingenio non subeunda meo—

obviously means nothing but a repugnance to the observation of those petty formalities and rules which irritate and insult great minds: it is absurd to construe it to have been corporal punishment.—Sir Egerton Brydges: *Life of Milton*, p. 9.

reverence can give to the term *vetiti laris*, "a habitation from which he is excluded;" or how *exile* can be otherwise interpreted.[11] He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous master, and something else, which a temper like his cannot undergo.* What was more than threat was probably punishment.[12] This poem, which mentions his *exile*, proves likewise that it was not perpetual; for it concludes with a resolution of returning some time to Cambridge. And it may be conjectured, from the willingness with which he has perpetuated the memory of his exile, that its cause was such as gave him no shame.

He took both the usual degrees; that of Bachelor in 1628, and that of Master in 1632;[13] but he left the university with no kindness for its institution, alienated either by the injudicious severity of his governors or his own captious perverseness. The cause cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His scheme of education, inscribed to Hartlib, supersedes all academical instruction, being intended to comprise the whole time which men usually spend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, *till they proceed, as it is called, masters of arts.* And in his Discourse *on the likeliest Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingenuously proposes that *the*

[11] The words *vetiti laris*, and afterwards *exilium*, will not suffer us to determine otherwise than that Milton was sentenced to undergo a temporary removal or rustication from Cambridge. I will not suppose for any immoral irregularity. Dr. Bainbridge, the master, is reported to have been a very active disciplinarian; and this lover of liberty, we may presume, was as little disposed to submission and conformity in a college as in a state.—T. WARTON: *Milton's Minor Poems*, p. 421.

[12] That Milton was whipped at college rests on the authority of Aubrey, who states the circumstance in connection with other particulars of the poet's early life as "from his brother Mr. Christopher Milton." Aubrey's accuracy is curiously confirmed by the industry and knowledge of T. Warton (see Aubrey's 'Lives,' iii. 444, and 'Milton's Minor Poems,' by Warton, p. 423). Aubrey was a curious inquirer, with ample means of information, and no motive whatever for telling a lie. He went to the poet's widow and to Marvell for information. Marvell promised Aubrey to write the Life of Milton. This (unfulfilled) promise I derive from an unprinted letter in the Ashmolean Mus., addressed by Aubrey to Wood.

[13] In which year appeared his first printed performance, his epitaph on Shakespeare prefixed to the folio of 1632.

profits of the lands forfeited by the act for superstitious uses should be applied to such academies all over the land where languages and arts may be taught together: so that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honest trade, by which means such of them as had the gift, being enabled to support themselves without tithes by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men designed for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, *writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trincalos,*[14] *buffoons and bawds, prostituting the shame of that ministry which they had, or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and mademoiselles.*

This is sufficiently peevish in a man who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates with great luxuriance the compensation which the pleasures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal when they were acted by academics.

He went to the university with a design of entering into the Church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared that, whoever became a clergyman must "subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which, unless he took with a conscience that could not retch, he must straight perjure himself. He thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing."

These expressions are, I find, applied to the subscription of the Articles; but it seems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which seem to thwart his opinions: but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raised his indignation.

His unwillingness to engage in the ministry, perhaps not yet advanced to a settled resolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends who had reproved his suspended and

[14] The last dramatic performance at either university was, it is said, *The Grateful Fair*, written by Christopher Smart, and represented at Pembroke College, Cambridge, about 1747. It has not, I believe, been printed.

dilatory life, which he seems to have imputed to an insatiable curiosity and fantastic luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plausible answer, in which he endeavours to persuade him that the delay proceeds not from the delights of desultory study, but from the desire of obtaining more fitness for his task; and that he goes on, *not taking thought of being late, so it give advantage to be more fit.*

When he left the university he returned to his father, then residing at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, with whom he lived five years, in which time he is said to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this universality is to be understood, who shall inform us?

It might be supposed that he who read so much should have done nothing else; but Milton found time to write the masque of 'Comus,' which was presented at Ludlow, then the residence of the Lord President of Wales, in 1634;[15] and had the honour of being acted by the Earl of Bridgewater's sons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's 'Circe;'[16] but we never can refuse to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

> "——— a quo ceu fonte perenni
> Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis."

His next production was 'Lycidas,' an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory.[17] Milton's

[15] But not printed till 1637.

[16] This is not strictly true. 'Comus' had its origin partly in an accident which occurred to the sons and daughter of the Earl of Bridgewater (they were benighted in Haywood Forest), and partly in 'The Old Wives' Tale,' a comedy by George Peele (1595, 4to.), in which two brothers are represented as wandering in quest of their sister, whom an enchanter had imprisoned.

[17] The Cambridge collection of verses on King's death, printed 1638 in a thin quarto, consists of three Greek, nineteen Latin, and thirteen English poems. Milton's is the last in the volume. Cleveland has an English and Henry More a Greek poem. The other authors, though in most instances named, are unremembered.

acquaintance with the Italian writers may be discovered by a mixture of longer and shorter verses, according to the rules of Tuscan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by some lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is supposed about this time to have written his 'Arcades;' for while he lived at Horton he used sometimes to steal from his studies a few days, which he spent at Harefield [in Middlesex], the house of the Countess Dowager of Derby, where the 'Arcades' made part of a dramatic entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country; and had some purpose of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother[18] set him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's consent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions,[19] with the celebrated precept of prudence,—*I pensieri stretti, ed il viso sciolto;* "thoughts close, and looks loose."

In 1638 he left England, and went first to Paris, where, by the favour of Lord Scudamore, he had the opportunity of visiting Grotius, then residing at the French court as ambassador from Christina of Sweden.[20] From Paris he hasted into Italy, of which he had, with particular diligence, studied the language and literature; and, though he seems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, stayed two months at Florence, where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compositions with such applause as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope that, "by labour and intense study, which," says he, "I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature," he might "leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die."[21]

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the usual con-

[18] His mother died 3rd Aug., 1637, and was buried at Horton. (See 'Gent. Mag.' for September 1787, p. 779.)

[19] In a letter, dated 13th April, 1638, and printed by the author before 'Comus' with this heading—"The copy of a letter written by Sir Henry Wootton to the author, upon the following poem."

[20] This account of Milton's travels is taken from his own narrative in the *Defensio Secunda*, 1654, 12mo.

[21] The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty, 1641, 4to.

comitant of great abilities, a lofty and steady confidence in himself, perhaps not without some contempt of others; for scarcely any man ever wrote so much, and praised so few. Of his praise he was very frugal: as he set its value high, and considered his mention of a name as a security against the waste of time, and a certain preservation from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted distinction. Carlo Dati presented him with an encomiastic inscription, in the tumid lapidary style; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the first stanza is only empty noise; the rest are perhaps too diffuse on common topics, but the last is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindness by the learned and the great. Holstenius, the keeper of the Vatican Library, who had resided three years at Oxford, introduced him to Cardinal Barberini; and he, at a musical entertainment, waited for him at the door and led him by the hand into the assembly. Here Selvaggi praised him in a distich, and Salsilli in a tetrastic; neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salsilli, though not secure against a stern grammarian, turn the balance indisputably in Milton's favour.

Of these Italian testimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publish them before his poems; though he says he cannot be suspected but to have known that they were said *non tam de se, quam supra se.*

At Rome, as at Florence, he stayed only two months; a time indeed sufficient, if he desired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures, but certainly too short for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he passed on to Naples, in company of a hermit, a companion from whom little could be expected; yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manso, Marquis of Villa, who had been before the patron of Tasso. Manso was enough delighted with his accomplishments to honour him with a sorry

distich, in which he commends him for everything but his religion; and Milton, in return, addressed him in a Latin poem, which must have raised a high opinion of English elegance and literature.

His purpose was now to have visited Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the King and Parliament, he thought it proper to hasten home, rather than pass his life in foreign amusements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, though the merchants informed him of plots laid against him by the Jesuits, for the liberty of his conversations on religion. He had sense enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor shunning controversy. He had perhaps given some offence by visiting Galileo, then a prisoner in the Inquisition for philosophical heresy; and at Naples he was told by Manso, that, by his declarations on religious questions, he had excluded himself from some distinctions which he should otherwise have paid him. But such conduct, though it did not please, was yet sufficiently safe, and Milton stayed two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without molestation.

From Florence he visited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having sent away a collection of music and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably considered as the metropolis of orthodoxy.

Here he reposed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Deodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned professors of divinity. From Geneva he passed through France; and came home [August 1639], after an absence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Deodati;[22] a man whom it is reasonable to suppose of great

[22] Charles Deodati, son of Theodore Deodati, a native of Geneva, "in Medicina Doctoris," married to an English lady of good birth and fortune, was born in London in 1608, educated at St. Paul's School, at which Milton was educated, and entered of Trinity College, Oxford, 7th Feb., 1621, where he was a Gentleman Commoner, and where he took the degree of Master of Arts. He

merit, since he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, entitled 'Epitaphium Damonis,' written with the common but childish imitation of pastoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the house of one Russel, a tailor, in St. Bride's churchyard, and undertook the education of Edward and John Philips, his sister's sons. Finding his rooms too little, he took [1641] a house and garden in Aldersgate-street, which was not then so much out of the world as it is now, and chose his dwelling at the upper end of a passage, that he might avoid the noise of the street. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and instructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performance —on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapours away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers seem inclined to shrink. They are unwilling that Milton should be degraded to a school-master; but, since it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuse an act which no wise man will consider as in itself disgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample; and he supplied its deficiencies by an honest and useful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable list is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Aldersgate-street, by youth between ten and fifteen or sixteen years of age. Those who tell or receive these stories should consider that nobody can be taught faster than he can learn. The speed of the horseman must be limited by the power of his horse. Every man that has ever undertaken to instruct others, can tell what slow advances he has been able

has a copy of Alcaics in the Oxford Collection, on the death of Camden (Camden's 'Insignia,' Oxon. 1624), practised physic in Cheshire, and died 1638.

to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.

The purpose of Milton, as it seems, was to teach something more solid than the common literature of schools, by reading those authors that treat of physical subjects; such as the Georgic, and astronomical treatises of the ancients. This was a scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embellishments of life, formed the same plan of education in his imaginary college.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and justice are virtues and excellences of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one man may know another half his life without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostatics or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Those authors, therefore, are to be read at schools that supply most axioms of prudence, most principles of moral truth, and most materials for conversation; and these purposes are best served by poets, orators, and historians.[23]

Let me not be censured for this digression as pedantic or paradoxical; for, if I have Milton against me, I have Socrates

[23] Education in England has been in danger of being hurt by two of its greatest men, Milton and Locke. Milton's plan is impracticable, and I suppose has never been tried.—JOHNSON: *Boswell by Croker*, p. 618.

on my side. It was his labour to turn philosophy from the study of nature to speculations upon life; but the innovators whom I oppose are turning off attention from life to nature. They seem to think that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

Ὅτι τοι ἐν μεγάροισι κακόντ' ἀγαθόντε τέτυκται.[24]

Of institutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a small 'History of Poetry,' written in Latin by his nephew, [Edward] Philips, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.[25]

That in his school, as in everything else which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reason for doubting. One part of his method deserves general imitation. He was careful to instruct his scholars in religion. Every Sunday was spent upon theology; of which he dictated a short system, gathered from the writers that were then fashionable in Dutch universities.

He set his pupils an example of hard study and spare diet; only now and then he allowed himself to pass a day of festivity and indulgence with some gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.[26]

[24] From Homer. The same quotation and application occurs in Erasmus, c. i. l. 63.

[25] Tractatulus de Carmine Dramatico Poetarum Veterum, præsertim in Choris Tragicis et veteris Comœdiæ, etc. Lond. 1670. Johnson derived his knowledge of this little volume from Warton's 'Essay on Pope,' i. 203, 4th ed. Edward was also the author of 'Theatrum Poetarum, or a Complete Collection of the Poets,' 12mo. 1675, written in English, and in which some of the judgments given were derived, it is said, from Milton. Both brothers were authors by profession. See their Lives by Godwin, 4to. 1815, and Malone's 'Inquiry,' 8vo. 1796, p. 203.

[26] Once in three weeks or a month he would drop into the society of some young sparks of his acquaintance, the chief whereof were Mr. Alphry and Mr. Miller, two gentlemen of Gray's Inn, the beaus of those times, but nothing near so bad as those nowadays; with these gentlemen he would so far make bold with his body as now and then to keep a gaudy-day.—E. Philips, 1694, p. xxi.

He now began to engage in the controversies of the times, and lent his breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641 he published a treatise of 'Reformation,' in two books, against the Established Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he says, *inferior to the prelates in learning*.

Hall, Bishop of Norwich, had published an 'Humble Remonstrance,' in defence of Episcopacy; to which, in 1641, five ministers,[27] of whose names the first letters made the celebrated word *Smectymnuus*, gave their Answer. Of this Answer a Confutation was attempted by the learned Usher; and to the Confutation Milton published [1641] a Reply, entitled 'Of Prelatical Episcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apostolical Times, by virtue of those testimonies which are alleged to that purpose in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James Lord Bishop of Armagh.' I have transcribed this title to show, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners.

His next work was 'The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelaty, by Mr. John Milton, 1642.' In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers, and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases. To this must be added, industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs; till which in some measure be compast, I refuse not to sustain this expectation." From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the 'Paradise Lost.'

He published the same year two more pamphlets upon the same question. To one of his antagonists, who affirms that he

[27] Stephen Marshall, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young (his tutor), Matthew Newcomen, William Spinstow.

was *vomited out of the university*, he answers, in general terms, "The Fellows of the College wherein I spent some years, at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many times how much better it would content that I should stay. As for the common approbation or dislike of that place, as now it is, that I should esteem or disesteem myself the more for that, too simple is the answerer, if he think to obtain with me. Of small practice were the physician who could not judge, by what she and her sister have of long time vomited, that the worser stuff she strongly keeps in her stomach, but the better she is ever kecking at, and is queasy; she vomits now out of sickness; but before it will be well with her, she must vomit with strong physic. The university, in the time of her better health, and my younger judgment, I never greatly admired, but now much less."

This is surely the language of a man who thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds to describe the course of his conduct, and the train of his thoughts; and, because he has been suspected of incontinence, gives an account of his own purity: "That if I be justly charged," says he, "with this crime, it may come upon me with tenfold shame."

The style of his piece is rough, and such perhaps was that of his antagonist. This roughness he justifies, by great examples, in a long digression. Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Lest I should take him for some chaplain in hand, some squire of the body to his prelate, one who serves not at the altar only, but at the Court-cupboard, he will bestow on us a pretty model of himself; and sets me out half a dozen phthisical mottoes, wherever he had them, hopping short in the measure of convulsion fits; in which labour the agony of his wit having scaped narrowly, instead of well-sized periods, he greets us with a quantity of thumb-ring posies.—And thus ends this section, or rather dissection, of himself." Such is the controversial merriment of Milton; his gloomy seriousness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that hell grows darker at his frown.*[28]

[28] Dr. Johnson uses the language of forbearance when rising from the perusal

His father, after Reading was taken by Essex [May 1643], came to reside in his house;[29] and his school increased. At Whitsuntide [1643], in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powell, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire.[30] He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study; for, as Philips relates, "having for a month led a philosophic life (after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and joviality), her friends, possibly incited by her own desire, made earnest suit by letter to have her company the remaining part of the summer, which was granted, on condition of her return at Michaelmas or thereabout."[31]

Milton was too busy to much miss his wife: he pursued his studies; and now and then visited the Lady Margaret Ley, whom he has mentioned in one of his sonnets. At last Michaelmas arrived; but the lady had no inclination to return to the sullen gloom of her husband's habitation, and therefore very

of this fiend-like cursing [of which a specimen is given]. He merely observed, "Such was Milton's controversial malignity that *hell grew blacker at his frown.*" —GIFFORD: *Ben Jonson*, vi. 260.

[29] His father, who, till the taking of Reading by the Earl of Essex his forces, had lived with his other son at his house there, was, upon that son's dissettlement, necessitated to betake himself to this his eldest son, with whom he lived for some years, even to his dying day.—E. PHILIPS, 1694, p. xxi.

[30] Richard Powell, of Forest Hill, in the county of Oxford, Esq. He was a steady royalist; was in Oxford at its surrender; and afterwards took the covenant rather for peace than conscience' sake. He died without a will, 1st Jan. 1646, at Milton's house in Barbican (TODD'S *Life*, ed. 1852, p. 57), leaving the result of sequestrations to his widow (the mother of Milton's wife), with only her *third*, or 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, to maintain herself and eight children.

[31] I have now before me an original "Inventorie of the goods of Mr. Richard Powell of Forest Hill, in the county of Oxon, taken the 10th of June, A.D. 1646." This seems to have been taken in consequence of a seizure of Mr. Powell's house by the rebels. His distresses in the royal cause probably prevented the payment of his daughter's marriage portion. By the number, order, and furniture of the rooms, he appears to have lived as a country gentleman, in a very extensive and liberal style of housekeeping. This I mention to confirm what is said by Philips, that Mr. Powell's daughter abruptly left her husband within a month after their marriage, disgusted with his spare diet and hard study, "after having been used at home to a great house, and much company and joviality."—T. WARTON: *Milton's Poems*, 1791, p. xxxi.

willingly forgot her promise. He sent her a letter, but had no answer; he sent more with the same success. It could be alleged that letters miscarry; he therefore despatched a messenger, being by this time too angry to go himself. His messenger was sent back with some contempt The family of the lady were Cavaliers.

In a man whose opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, less provocation than this might have raised violent resentment. Milton soon determined to repudiate her for disobedience; and, being one of those who could easily find arguments to justify inclination, published (in 1644) 'The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce;' which was followed [1644] by 'The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce;' and the next year, his Tetrachordon, 'Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage.'

This innovation was opposed, as might be expected, by the clergy, who, then holding their famous assembly at Westminster, procured that the author should be called before the Lords; "but that House," says Wood, "whether approving the doctrine, or not favouring his accusers, did soon dismiss him."

There seems not to have been much written against him, nor anything by any writer of eminence. The antagonist that appeared is styled by him *a serving man turned solicitor*. Howel in his letters mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I suppose, thought more worthy of derision than of confutation. He complains of this neglect in two sonnets, of which the first is contemptible,[32] and the second not excellent.

From this time it is observed that he became an enemy to the Presbyterians, whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his interest; he loves himself rather than truth.

[32] A Life of Milton is yet a desideratum in our literature. Johnson hated his democratic principles, and despised his impracticable philosophy: the severity with which he handled him was only restrained by a veneration for his piety, and perhaps ignorance of his Arianism; but the bias of his mind is not more discoverable in the sternness of his criticism than in his selecting for his Dictionary, as an example of a sonnet, that very one by Milton which he pronounces "contemptible."—SOUTHEY: *Quarterly Review*, xxxvi. 42.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unresisting sufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accomplishments, the daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they resolved to endeavour a reunion. He went sometimes to the house of one Blackborough, his relation, "in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand," and at one of his usual visits was surprised to see his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveness on her knees. He resisted her entreaties for a while; "but partly," says Philips, "his own generous nature, more inclinable to reconciliation than to perseverance in anger and revenge, and partly the strong intercession of friends on both sides, soon brought him to an act of oblivion and a firm league of peace."[33] It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own house when they were distressed, with other Royalists.[34]

He published about the same time his 'Areopagitica, a Speech of Mr. John Milton[35] for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing.' The danger of such unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the science of government which human understanding seems hitherto unable to solve. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no settlement; if every

[33] She ended weeping; and her lowly plight,
Immoveable, till peace obtained from fault
Acknowledged and deplored, in Adam wrought
Commiseration. Soon his heart relented
Towards her, his life so late and sole delight,
Now at his feet submissive in distress;
Creature so fair his reconcilement seeking,
His counsel, whom she had displeased, his aid.
As one disarm'd, his anger all he lost,
And thus with peaceful words uprais'd her soon.

Paradise Lost, book x.

[34] His father-in-law died in his house "on or about the 1st of January, 1646–7."

[35] In Nov. 1644.

murmurer at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every sceptic in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions which that society shall think pernicious; but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestic, poetry was never long out of his thoughts.

About this time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the 'Allegro' and 'Penseroso,' with some others, were first published.[36]

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away, "and the house again," says Philips, "now looked like a house of the Muses only, though the accession of scholars was not great. Possibly his proceeding thus far in the education of youth may have been the occasion of some of his adversaries calling him pedagogue and schoolmaster, whereas it is well known he never set up for a public school, to teach all the young fry of a parish, but only was willing to impart his learning and knowledge to relations, and the sons of some gentlemen who were his intimate friends; besides, that neither his converse nor his writings nor his manner of teaching savoured in the least of pedantry."

Thus laboriously does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confessed without disgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment.

[36] Printed for Humphrey Moseley, the great poetical publisher between 1640 and 1660. He was succeeded by Herringman, as Herringman was by Tonson. Before this exquisite little volume (now fetching a high price) is a print of Milton by Marshall, with Milton's satirical Greek verses beneath it.

This, however, his warmest friends seem not to have found; they therefore shift and palliate. He did not sell literature to all comers at an open shop; he was a chamber-milliner, and measured his commodities to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this state of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued; and, to raise his character again, has a mind to invest him with military splendour: "He is much mistaken," he says, "if there was not about this time a design of making him Adjutant-General in Sir William Waller's army. But the new-modelling of the army proved an obstruction to the design." An event cannot be set at a much greater distance than by having been only *designed, about some time*, if a man *be not much mistaken.* Milton shall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips be not much mistaken, somebody at some time designed him for a soldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a smaller house in Holborn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have published anything afterwards till the King's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Presbyterians, he wrote a treatise to justify it, and *to compose the minds of the people.*

He made some 'Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Irish Rebels.' While he contented himself to write, he perhaps did only what his conscience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his own passions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, first willingly admitted and then habitually indulged; if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and desire superinduced conviction; he yet shared only the common weakness of mankind, and might be no less sincere than his opponents. But as faction seldom leaves a man honest, however it might find him, Milton is suspected of having interpolated the book called 'Icon Basilike,' which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin secretary,[37] employed him to censure, by inserting a prayer taken

[37] On the 13th March, 1648–9, a Committee of the Council of State was among other matters directed "to speake with Mr. Milton, and know whether

from Sidney's 'Arcadia,' and imputing it to the King, whom he charges, in his 'Iconoclastes,' with the use of this prayer, as with a heavy crime, in the indecent language with which prosperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to insult all that is venerable or great: "Who would have imagined so little fear in him of the true all-seeing Deity, as, immediately before his death, to pop into the hands of the grave bishop that attended him, as a special relique of his saintly exercises, a prayer stolen word for word from the mouth of a heathen woman praying to a heathen god?"

The papers which the King gave to Dr. Juxon on the scaffold the regicides took away, so that they were at least the publishers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who had examined the question with great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The use of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could so noisily censure it, with a little extension of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuse.

King Charles II., being now sheltered in Holland, employed Salmasius, professor of polite learning at Leyden, to write a *Defence* of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his industry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred jacobuses. Salmasius was a man of skill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and sagacity of emendatory criticism, almost exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by excessive praises, been confirmed in great confidence of himself, though he probably had not much considered the principles of society or the rights of government, undertook the employment without distrust of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 published 'Defensio Regis.'

To this Milton was required[38] to write a sufficient answer,

he will be employed as Secretary for the Foreign Tongues, and to report to the Council;" and two days after it was "ordered by the Council that Mr. John Milton be employed as Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council, and that he have the same salary which Mr. Weckherlyn formerly had for the same service."—TODD'S *Life of Milton*, p. 69, ed. 1852.

[38] 1649–50, Jan. 8.—That Mr. Milton doe prepare something in answer to the book of Salmasius, and when he hath done itt bring itt to the Councill.—*Order Book of the Council of State*: TODD'S *Life*, ed. 1852, p. 72.

which he performed (1650) in such a manner, that Hobbes declared himself[39] unable to decide whose language was best, or whose arguments were worst. In my opinion, Milton's periods are smoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himself with teasing his adversary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salmasius, whose doctrine he considers as servile and unmanly, to the stream of *Salmacis*, which whoever entered left half his virility behind him. Salmasius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a scold. *Tu es Gallus*, says Milton, *et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus.* But his supreme pleasure is to tax his adversary, so renowned for criticism, with vicious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has used *persona*, which, according to Milton, signifies only a *mask*, in a sense not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *person*. But as Nemesis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a solecism by an expression in itself grossly solecistical, when for one of those supposed blunders, he says, as Ker, and I think some one before him,[40] has remarked, *propino te grammatistis tuis* vapulandum. From *vapulo*, which has a passive sense, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, sink into questions of grammar, if grammarians discuss them.[41]

Milton, when he undertook this answer, was weak of body and dim of sight; but his will was forwarded, and what was wanting of health was supplied by zeal. He was rewarded with

[39] See Todd's 'Life of Milton,' ed. 1852, p. 80.

[40] Vavassor de Epigr. cxxii. p. 144. See Mitford's *Life of Milton*, p. clxxii. ed. 1851.

[41] —— he who fought at barriers with Salmasius,
Engaged with nothing but his style and phrases;
Waived to assert the murder of a prince,
The author of false Latin to convince;
But laid the merits of the cause aside,
By those that understood them, to be tried;
And counted breaking Priscian's head a thing
More capital than to behead a king,
For which he 'as been admir'd by all the learn'd,
Of knaves concern'd, and pedants unconcern'd.
Butler: *Upon Human Learning.*

a thousand pounds,[42] and his book was much read—for paradox, recommended by spirit and elegance, easily gains attention; and he who told every man that he was equal to his King, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmasius was not dispersed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerness, is very credible. He taught only the stale doctrine of authority, and the unpleasing duty of submission; and he had been so long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almost all mankind were delighted to find him defied and insulted by a new name, not yet considered as any one's rival. If Christina, as is said, commended the 'Defence of the People,' her purpose must be to torment Salmasius, who was then at her court; for neither her civil station nor her natural character could dispose them to favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper despotic.

That Salmasius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man so long accustomed to admiration, a little praise of his antagonist would be sufficiently offensive, and might incline him to leave Sweden, from which however he was dismissed, not with any mark of contempt, but with a train of attendance scarcely less than regal.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was published by his son in the year of the Restoration. In the beginning, being probably most in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his use of the word *persona;* but, if I remember right, he misses a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth satire:

> "——Quid agis cum dira et fœdior omni
> Crimine *persona* est?"

As Salmasius reproached Milton with losing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himself with the belief that he had

[42] That Milton received this sum from the Council of State was first told by Toland, and has since been copied by other biographers; but the Council books, where *thanks* alone are given to Milton for his book, do not support Toland's assertion.—See Todd's *Life,* ed. 1852, p. 81.

shortened Salmasius's life; and both, perhaps, with more malignity than reason. Salmasius died at the Spa, September 3, 1653; and, as controvertists are commonly said to be killed by their last dispute, Milton was flattered with the credit of destroying him.

Cromwell had now dismissed the Parliament by the authority of which he had destroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himself, under the title of Protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was lawful, never was pretended; he himself founded his right only in necessity: but Milton, having now tasted the honey of public employment, would not return to hunger and philosophy, but, continuing to exercise his office under a manifest usurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more just than that rebellion should end in slavery; that he who had justified the murder of his king, for some acts which to him seemed unlawful, should now sell his services and his flatteries to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for some years; but his vigour of intellect was such that he was not disabled to discharge his office of Latin secretary, or continue his controversies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too strong to be subdued.

About this time [1654] his first wife died in childbed, having left him three daughters.[43] As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but, after a short time,[44] married Catherine, the daughter of one Captain Woodcock, of Hackney, a woman doubtless educated in opinions like his own. She died, within a year, of childbirth, or some distemper that followed it;[45] and her husband honoured her memory with a poor sonnet.

The first reply to Milton's 'Defensio Populi' was published

[43] Of whom Deborah, the youngest, was born 2nd May, 1652, in Westminster. Hunter's *Milton*, p. 34; Philips's *Life*, 1694, p. xli.

[44] His marriage to Catherine Woodcocke is recorded in the register of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, London, under the 12th Nov. 1656.

[45] She was buried in St. Margaret's, Westminster, 10th Feb. 1657–8.

in 1651, called 'Apologia pro Rege et Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni Angli) defensionem destructivam Regis et Populi.' Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew [John] Philips—under whose name he published [1652] an answer, so much corrected by him that it might be called his own—imputed it to Bramhall; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themselves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only suspected.[46]

Next year appeared 'Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cœlum.' Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus, or More, a French minister, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton in his 'Defensio Secunda' [1654], and overwhelmed by such violence of invective that he began to shrink under the tempest, and gave his persecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated against his malignity, and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin should escape than that he should be convicted of mistake.

In this second Defence he shows that his eloquence is not merely satirical; the rudeness of his invective is equalled by the grossness of his flattery. "Deserimur, Cromuelle, tu solus superes, ad te summa nostrarum rerum rediit, in te solo consistit, insuperabili tuæ virtuti cedimus cuncti, nemine vel obloquente, nisi qui æquales inæqualis ipse honores sibi quærit, aut digniori concessos invidet, aut non intelligit nihil esse in societate hominum magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi consentaneum, esse in civitate nihil æquius, utilius, quam potiri rerum dignissimum. Eum te agnoscunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis maximus et gloriosissimus,[47] dux publici consilii, exer-

[46] It appears from a MS. letter of Bishop Bramhall's, referred to by Todd ('Life,' ed. 1852, p. 85), that the *Apologia* was written "by one John Rowland."

[47] It may be doubted whether *gloriosissimus* be here used with Milton's boasted purity. *Res gloriosa* is an *illustrious thing*; but *vir gloriosus* is commonly a *braggart*, as in *miles gloriosus*.—JOHNSON.

citum fortissimorum imperator, pater patriæ gessisti. Sic tu spontanea bonorum omnium et animitus missa voce salutaris."

Cæsar, when he assumed the perpetual dictatorship, had not more servile or more elegant flattery. A translation may show its servility, but its elegance is less attainable. Having exposed the unskilfulness or selfishness of the former government, "We were left," says Milton, "to ourselves: the whole national interest fell into your hands, and subsists only in your abilities. To your virtue, overpowering and resistless, every man gives way, except some who, without equal qualifications, aspire to equal honours, who envy the distinctions of merit greater than their own, or who have yet to learn that in the coalition of human society nothing is more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind should have the sovereign power. Such, Sir, are you by general confession; such are the things achieved by you, the greatest and most glorious of our countrymen, the director of our public councils, the leader of unconquered armies, the father of your country; for by that title does every good man hail you with sincere and voluntary praise."

Next year [1655], having defended all that wanted defence, he found leisure to defend himself. He undertook his own vindication against More, whom he declares in his title to be justly called the author of the 'Regii Sanguinis clamor.' In this there is no want of vehemence or eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit. "Morus es? an Momus? an uterque idem est?" He then remembers that *Morus* is Latin for a mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation:

> "——Poma alba ferebat
> Quæ post nigra tulit Morus."

With this piece ended his controversies; and he from this time gave himself up to his private studies and his civil employment.

As secretary to the Protector[45] he is supposed to have written

[45] Milton was only Secretary for Foreign Tongues to the Council of State; but some of his biographers elevate him to a much higher rank, and attribute a political influence to him which he never possessed.

the Declaration of the reasons for a war with Spain. His agency was considered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully suspended, the delay was publicly imputed to Mr. Milton's indisposition; and the Swedish agent was provoked to express his wonder that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.[49]

Being now forty-seven years old, and seeing himself disencumbered from external interruptions, he seems to have recollected his former purposes, and to have resumed three great works which he had planned for his future employment—an epic poem, the history of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To collect a dictionary seems a work of all others least practicable in a state of blindness, because it depends upon perpetual and minute inspection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it after he had lost his eyes; but having had it always before him, he continued it, says Philips, *almost to his dying-day; but the papers were so discomposed and deficient that they could not be fitted for the press.* The compilers of the Latin dictionary printed at Cambridge had the use of those collections in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.[50]

To compile a history from various authors, when they can only be consulted by other eyes, is not easy, nor possible, but with more skilful and attentive help than can be commonly

[49] Whitelocke's 'Memorials,' 6th May, 1656, ed. 1732, p. 645. President Bradshaw, who died in 1659, by a codicil to his will, dated 10th Sept. 1655, left 10*l.* to "Mr. John Milton."

[50] The 'Cambridge Dictionary,' published in 4to. 1693, is a copy, with some small additions, of that of Dr. Adam Littleton in 1685, by sundry persons, of whom there is reason to believe that Edward Philips was one.

The MS. of his Latin 'Treatise on Christian Doctrine,' and a corrected copy of all the foreign letters written by him as Latin Secretary, Milton gave to Daniel Skinner, by whom they were placed (1676) in Elzevir's hands to be printed; but on the remonstrance, and something more, of Sir Joseph Williamson, then Secretary of State, they were surrendered by Skinner, and lodged in the State Paper Office, where they were accidentally discovered in 1823. Skinner relates the story of the MSS. in a letter to Pepys, dated "Rotterdam, Nov. 19, 1676."—PEPYS: *Tangier Journal, &c.*, 2 vols. 8vo. 1841, vol. i. p. 169, and ii. 297.

obtained; and it was probably the difficulty of consulting and comparing that stopped Milton's narrative at the Conquest; a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the subject of his epic poem, after much deliberation, *long choosing, and beginning late*, he fixed upon 'Paradise Lost;' a design so comprehensive that it could be justified only by success. He had once designed to celebrate King Arthur, as he hints in his verses to Mansus; but *Arthur was reserved*, says Fenton, *to another destiny*.[51]

It appears, by some sketches of poetical projects left in manuscript, and to be seen in a library at Cambridge,[52] that he had digested his thoughts on this subject into one of those wild dramas which were anciently called Mysteries; and Philips had seen[53] what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the first ten lines of Satan's address to the Sun. These mysteries consist of allegorical persons; such as Justice, Mercy, Faith. Of the Tragedy or Mystery of 'Paradise Lost' there are two plans:

The Persons.	*The Persons.*
Michael.	Moses.
Chorus of Angels.	Divine Justice, Wisdom,
Heavenly Love.	Heavenly Love.
Lucifer.	The Evening Star, Hesperus.
Adam, Eve, with the Serpent.	Chorus of Angels.
Conscience.	Lucifer.
Death.	Adam.
Labour, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, with others, Mutes.	Eve.
Faith.	Conscience.
Hope.	Labour, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, Mutes.
Charity.	Faith.
	Hope.
	Charity.

[51] To Sir Richard Blackmore. [52] Trinity College, Cambridge.
[53] Philips, 12mo. 1694, p. xxxv.

PARADISE LOST.

The Persons.

Moses, προλογίζει, recounting how he assumed his true body; that it corrupts not, because it is with God in the mount; declares the like with Enoch and Elijah; besides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews, and clouds preserve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the sight of God; tells they cannot see Adam in the state of innocence, by reason of their sin.

Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, } debating what should become of man, if he fall.

Chorus of Angels singing a hymn of the Creation.

Act II.

Heavenly Love.
Evening Star.
Chorus sing the marriage-song, and describe Paradise.

Act III.

Lucifer contriving Adam's ruin.
Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

Act IV.

Adam, Eve, } fallen.

Conscience cites them to God's examination.
Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has lost.

Act V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.
———————— presented by an angel with
Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, } Mutes.
To whom he gives their names. Likewise Winter, Heat, Tempest, &c.

Faith, Hope, Charity, } comfort him and instruct him.

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his first design, which could have produced only an allegory, or mystery. The following sketch seems to have attained more maturity.

ADAM UNPARADISED:

The angel Gabriel, either descending or entering; showing, since this globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven; describes Paradise. Next, the Chorus, showing the reason of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears; after his overthrow bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs: whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victory in heaven, against him and his accomplices: as before, after the first act, was sung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and insulting in what he had done to the destruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been seduced by the Serpent, appears confusedly covered with leaves. Conscience, in a shape, accuses him; Justice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the mean while, the Chorus entertains the stage, and is informed by some angel the manner of the fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuse one another; but especially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is stubborn in his offence. Justice appears, reasons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admonishes Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is sent to banish them out of Paradise; but before causes to pass before his eyes, in shapes, a mask of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, despairs; at last appears Mercy, comforts him, promises the Messiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; instructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, submits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught.

These are very imperfect rudiments of 'Paradise Lost;' but it is pleasant to see great works in their seminal state pregnant with latent possibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expansion, and to observe how they are sometimes suddenly advanced by accidental hints, and sometimes slowly improved by steady meditation.

Invention is almost the only literary labour which blindness cannot obstruct, and therefore he naturally solaced his solitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be necessarily previous to poeti-

cal excellence; he had made himself acquainted with *seemly arts and affairs;* his comprehension was extended by various knowledge, and his memory stored with intellectual treasures. He was skilful in many languages, and had by reading and composition attained the full mastery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of perusing them.

But while his greater designs were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amused himself, as he could, with little productions. He sent to the press (1658) a manuscript of Raleigh, called the 'Cabinet Council;' and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy by a 'Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church.'

Oliver was now dead; Richard was constrained to resign: the system of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton saw himself and his cause in equal danger. But he had still hope of doing something. He wrote letters, which Toland has published, to such men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth: and even in the year of the Restoration he *bated no jot of heart or hope*, but was fantastical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be settled by a pamphlet, called 'A ready and easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth;' which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the King was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, 'Notes' upon a sermon preached by one Griffith, entitled 'The Fear of God and the King.' To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in a pamphlet petulantly called 'No Blind Guides.'

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the King was now about to be restored with the irre-

sistible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer secretary, and was consequently obliged to quit the house which he held by his office; and proportioning his sense of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to seek some shelter, and hid himself for a time in Bartholomew-close, by West Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of respect, perhaps unconsciously, paid to this great man by his biographers: every house in which he resided is historically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his presence.[54]

The King, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs; and promised to admit into the Act of Oblivion all except those whom the parliament should except; and the parliament doomed none to capital punishment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the King. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only justified what they had done.

This justification was indeed sufficiently offensive; and (June 16) an order was issued to seize Milton's 'Defence,'[55] and Goodwin's 'Obstructors of Justice,' another book of the same tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to prosecute the authors; but Milton was not seized, nor perhaps very diligently pursued.

Not long after (August 19) the flutter of innumerable bosoms was stilled by an act, which the King, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an Act of Oblivion than of Grace. Goodwin was named, with nineteen

[54] And yet Johnson has omitted all mention of his Westminster residence,—unless "the house which he held by his office" may be said to allude to it, an official residence in which, however, I have no kind of belief. What says Philips? "He soon after took a pretty garden-house in Petty France, in Westminster, next door to the Lord Scudamore's, and opening into St. James's Park. Here he remained no less than eight years, namely, from the year 1652 till within a few weeks of King Charles II.'s Restoration. In this house his first wife dying in childbed, he married a second."—PHILIPS, 1694, p. xxxiii.

[55] The proclamation for calling in and suppressing Milton's 'Defence,' &c., includes his 'Answer to the Portraicture' as well, and is dated 13th August, 1660. There is a copy in the British Museum. It is reprinted in Kennett's 'Register,' p. 189, and in Chalmers's 'Supp. Apology,' p. 7.

more, as incapacitated for any public trust; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tenderness shown to Milton, the curiosity of mankind has not forborne to inquire the reason. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another instance which may confirm Dalrymple's observation, who says, "that whenever Burnet's narrations are examined, he appears to be mistaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his prosecution was ordered: it must be therefore by design that he was included in the general oblivion. He is said to have had friends in the House, such as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges; and undoubtedly a man like him must have had influence. A very particular story of his escape is told by Richardson in his Memoirs,[56] which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant.[57] In the war between the King and Parliament, Davenant was made prisoner and condemned to die; but was spared at the request of Milton. When the turn of success brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generosity and gratitude so pleasing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his escape there is no account.[58] Betterton's narration can be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it seems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger. Goodwin, who had committed the same kind of crime, escaped with incapacitation; and as exclusion from public trust is a punishment which the power of government can

[56] Richardson, p. xc. Marvel in 1660 had very little influence; Morrice and Clarges (by Monk's position) were all-influential.

[57] Dr. Johnson is puzzled on what authority to fix this anecdote. I believe it was first retailed in print by Wood, 'Ath. Oxon.,' ii. 412 [ed. 1721].—MALONE: *Shak. by Boswell*, iii. 282.

[58] Davenant obtained the liberty of the Tower, and ultimately his release (16th Aug. 1659), through Whitelocke's intercession. A coarse jest of Harry Martin's is said to have *saved his life*. Aubrey, it is right to add, attributes his escape to the interest exercised in his behalf by two aldermen of York, whom he had released on his own responsibility while serving under the Marquis of Newcastle. Wood follows Aubrey.

commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great interest to exempt Milton from a censure little more than verbal. Something may be reasonably ascribed to veneration and compassion; to veneration of his abilities, and compassion for his distresses, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now poor and blind; and who would pursue with violence an illustrious enemy, depressed by fortune, and disarmed by nature?

The publication of the Act of Oblivion put him in the same condition with his fellow-subjects. He was, however, upon some pretence now not known, in the custody of the serjeant in December; and, when he was released, upon his refusal of the fees demanded, he and the serjeant were called before the House. He was now safe within the shade of oblivion, and knew himself to be as much out of the power of a griping officer as any other man. How the question was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended, but that he knew himself to have right on his side.

He then removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate-street; and being blind and by no means wealthy, wanted a domestic companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minshul, of a gentleman's family in Cheshire,[59] probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it gross and indelicate to be a second husband:[60] upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot now be known; but marriage afforded not much of his happiness. The first wife left him in disgust, and was brought back only by terror; the second, indeed, seems to have been more a favourite, but her life was short. The third, as Philips relates, oppressed his children in his life-time, and cheated them at his death.[61]

[59] Of the Minshuls of Wistaston, near Nantwich; marriage licence dated 11th Feb. 1662. See Sir Charles Young's Pedigree before Mitford's 'Life of Milton,' ed. 1851, and the 'Athenæum,' Nos. 1143, 1144, and 1147.

[60] Let not the reader forget that Johnson himself had married a widow.

[61] I can find no such relation in Philips. Johnson has made a slip of the pen, and written Philips instead of Richardson, who says, p. xcix, that his third wife was, he had heard, "a termagant;" but Richardson is silent on the subject of the oppression and the cheating.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obscure story,[62] he was offered the continuance of his employment, and being pressed by his wife to accept it, answered, "You, like other women, want to ride in your coach; my wish is to live and die an honest man." If he considered the Latin secretary as exercising any of the powers of government, he that had shared authority, either with the Parliament or Cromwell, might have forborne to talk very loudly of his honesty; and if he thought the office purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the King. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition: large offers and sturdy rejections are among the common topics of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661), 'Accidence commenced Grammar'—a little book which has nothing remarkable but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and was then writing 'Paradise Lost,' could descend from his elevation to rescue children from the perplexity of grammatical confusion, and the trouble of lessons unnecessarily repeated.

About this time Ellwood the Quaker, being recommended to him as one who would read Latin to him, for the advantage of his conversation, attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to read Latin with an English mouth is as ill a hearing as low French*, required that Ellwood should learn and practise the Italian pronunciation, which, he said, was necessary, if he would talk with foreigners. This seems to have been a task troublesome without use. There is little reason for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Englishman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he speaks Latin, may

[62] Preserved by Richardson, 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo. 1734, p. c.

so soon learn the sounds which every native gives it, that he need make no provision before his journey; and if strangers visit us, it is their business to practise such conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Ellwood complied with the directions, and improved himself by his attendance, for he relates that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not understand, and would stop him, and *open the most difficult passages.*

In a short time he took a house "in the *Artillery Walk*, leading to *Bunhill Fields*," the mention of which concludes the register of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than any other.

He was now busied by 'Paradise Lost.' Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy. Voltaire tells a wild and unauthorised story of a farce seen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus: *Let the Rainbow be the Fiddlestick of the Fiddle of Heaven.* It has been already shown that the first conception was a tragedy or mystery, not of a narrative, but a dramatic work, which he is supposed to have begun to reduce to its present form about the time (1655) when he finished his dispute with the defenders of the King.

He long had promised to adorn his native country by some great performance, while he had yet perhaps no settled design, and was stimulated only by such expectations as naturally arose from the survey of his attainments, and the consciousness of his powers. What he should undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long choosing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his

intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all public stations, he is yet too great not to be traced by curiosity to his retirement; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, sitting *before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality.*[63] His visitors of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported by Wood to have visited the house in Bread-stree where he was born.[64]

According to another account,[65] he was seen in a small house, *neatly enough dressed in black clothes, sitting in a room hung with rusty green; pale, but not cadaverous, with chalkstones in his hands. He said that if it were not for the gout, his blindness would be tolerable.*

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to use the common exercises, he used to swing in a chair, and sometimes played upon an organ.[66]

He was now confessedly and visibly employed upon his poem, of which the progress might be noted by those with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had composed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ some friend in writing them, having, at least for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to observations and reports.

Mr. Philips observes, that there was a very remarkable circumstance in the composure of 'Paradise Lost,' "which I have a particular reason," says he, "to remember; for whereas I had the perusal of it from the very beginning, for some years,

[63] Richardson's 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo. 1734, p. iv.

[64] This must have been before the publication of 'Paradise Lost,' as the house in Bread Street in which Milton was born was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.

[65] Richardson's 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo. 1734, p. iv.

[66] Ibid., p. v.

as I went from time to time to visit him, in parcels of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time (which, being written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want correction as to the orthography and pointing), having, as the summer came on, not been showed any for a considerable while, and desiring the reason thereof, was answered that his vein never happily flowed but from the autumnal equinox to the vernal; and that whatever he attempted at other times was never to his satisfaction, though he courted his fancy never so much; so that in all the years he was about this poem, he may be said to have spent but half his time therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has mistaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his 'Elegies,' declares, that with the advance of the spring he feels the increase of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires*. To this it is answered, that Philips could hardly mistake time so well marked;[67] and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life. Mr. Richardson conceives it impossible that *such a work should be suspended for six months, or for one. It may go on faster or slower, but it must go on*.[68] By what necessity it must continually go on, or why it might not be laid aside and resumed, it is not easy to discover.

This dependence of the soul upon the seasons, those temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur astris*. The author that thinks himself weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhausted. But while this notion has possession of the head, it produces the inability which it supposes. Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes; *possunt quia posse videntur*. When success seems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are suppressed by a cross wind, or a cloudy sky, the day is given up without resistance; for who can contend with the course of nature?

[67] Philips told the same story to Aubrey. See Aubrey's 'Lives,' iii. 447.
[68] Richardson's 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo., 1734, p. cxiv.

From such prepossessions Milton seems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was suspected that the whole creation languished, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predecessors, and that everything was daily sinking by gradual diminution.[69] Milton appears to suspect that souls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without some fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroic poesy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and sometimes finds reception among wise men—an opinion that restrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and supposes that a luckless mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wisdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared lest the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into a mind already occupied by such fancies, another not more reasonable might easily find its way. He that could fear lest his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might consistently magnify to himself the influence of the seasons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His submission to the seasons was at least more reasonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general causes must operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power; if less could be performed by the writer, less likewise would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of frosty grovellers he might still have risen into eminence by producing something which *they should not willingly let die.* However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might still be great among his contemporaries, with the hope

[69] The first who ventured to print an opinion of this kind in this country was Dr. Gabriel Goodman, bishop of Gloucester, and author of 'The Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature proved by Natural Reason.' Lond. 1616 and 1624, 4to.

of growing every day greater in the dwindle of posterity. He might still be a giant among the pigmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of study, or particular hours of composition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardson, who seems to have been very diligent in his inquiries, but discovers always a wish to find Milton discriminated from other men, relates, that "he would sometimes lie awake whole nights, but not a verse could he make; and on a sudden his poetical faculty would rush upon him with an *impetus* or *œstrum*, and his daughter was immediately called to secure what came. At other times he would dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath, and then reduce them to half the number." [70]

These bursts of light, and involutions of darkness, these transient and involuntary excursions and retrocessions of invention, having some appearance of deviation from the common train of nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanic cannot handle his hammer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardson's relation, casually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter *to secure what came*, may be questioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is universally confessed, to have employed any casual visitor in disburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The story of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and, though doubtless true of every fertile and copious mind, seems to have been gratuitously transferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he composed much of his poem in the night and morning, I suppose before his mind was disturbed with common business;

[70] Richardson's 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo., 1734, p. cxiv.

and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verse*. Versification, free, like his, from the distresses of rhyme, must, by a work so long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjusted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book shows that he had lost his sight; and the Introduction to the seventh, that the return of the King had clouded him with discountenance; and that he was offended by the licentious festivity of the Restoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his disloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection; but this, which, when he skulked from the approach of his King, was perhaps more than he hoped, seems not to have satisfied him; for no sooner is he safe, than he finds himself in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkness and with danger compassed round.* This darkness, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deserved compassion: but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjust. He was fallen indeed on *evil days;* the time was come in which regicides could no longer boast their wickedness. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at least equal to his other powers; Milton, whose warmest advocates must allow that he never spared any asperity of reproach or brutality of insolence.

But the charge itself seems to be false; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach cast upon him, either serious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He pursued his studies or his amusements without persecution, molestation, or insult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however misused: they who contemplated in Milton the scholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his King.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Bucks; where Ellwood, who had taken he house for him, first saw a complete copy of 'Paradise Lost,'

and, having perused it, said to him, "Thou hast said much here of Paradise Lost; but what hast thou to say of Paradise Found?" [71]

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceased, he returned to Bunhill-fields, and designed the publication of his poem. A licence was necessary, and he could expect no great kindness from a chaplain of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He seems, however, to have been treated with tenderness; for though objections were made to particular passages, and among them to the simile of the sun eclipsed in the first book, yet the licence was granted; and he sold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons, for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a stipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred should be sold of the first edition: and again, five pounds after the sale of the same number of the second edition; and another five pounds after the same sale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.[72]

The first edition was ten books, in a small quarto. The titles were varied from year to year;[73] and an advertisement, and the arguments of the books, were omitted in some copies, and inserted in others.

The sale gave him in two years a right to his second payment, for which the receipt was signed April 26, 1669. The second edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in small

[71] Ellwood's 'Autobiography,' 8vo., 1714, p. 246.

[72] The original covenant of indenture, signed by Milton, is now by the liberality of Mr. Rogers in the British Museum. Its history is curious. It was sold at Southgate's auction-room in the year 1826 (together with the original assignments of Dryden's 'Virgil' and the 'Spectator') to Mr. Prowett, bookseller, for the sum of 40*l.* Milton's agreement was purchased by Mr. Pickering, the publisher, who sold it to Sir Thomas Lawrence for 60*l.* At Lawrence's sale at Christie's, in June 1830, it was re-purchased by Mr. Pickering for 63*l.*, and sold by him to Mr. Rogers for one hundred guineas.

[73] There are copies of the first edition of 'Paradise Lost,' with *five* different title-pages. Some copies are dated '1667,' others '1668,' and not a few '1669.' The publishing price was three shillings. A good copy is now (1854) thought to sell cheap at five guineas. The entry on the Stationers' books is 20 August, 1669. I am unable to explain the differences in the title-pages, and the unusual delay in entering a published book at Stationers' Hall.

octavo; and the number of books was increased to twelve, by a division of the seventh and tenth; and some other small improvements were made. The third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683,—half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged.[74] In the history of 'Paradise Lost' a deduction thus minute will rather gratify than fatigue.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and inquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But has the case been truly stated? Have not lamentation and wonder been lavished on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the 'Paradise Lost' received no public acclamations is readily confessed. Wit and literature were on the side of the Court: and who that solicited favour or fashion would venture to praise the defender of the regicides? All that he himself could think his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that reverential silence which was generously preserved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The sale, if it be considered, will justify the public. Those who have no power to judge of past times but by their own, should always doubt their conclusions. The call for books was not in Milton's age what it is at present. To read was not then a general amusement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themselves disgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aspired to literature, nor was every house supplied with a closet of knowledge. Those indeed who professed learning were not less learned than at any other time; but of that

[74] The best portrait of Tonson (that by Kneller, of which there is a good engraving) represents him with 'Paradise Lost' in his hand.

middle race of students who read for pleasure or accomplishment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively small. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be sufficient to remark, that the nation had been satisfied from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakespeare, which probably did not together make one thousand copies.

The sale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in opposition to so much recent enmity, and to a style of versification new to all and disgusting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately increase; for many more readers than were supplied at first the nation did not afford. Only three thousand were sold in eleven years; for it forced its way without assistance; its admirers did not dare to publish their opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy still advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the secrecy of love, and 'Paradise Lost' broke into open view with sufficient security of kind reception.[75]

[75] In answer to what Johnson has advanced, I will ask in his own words, "Has the case been truly stated?" The century that was satisfied with but two editions of Shakespeare in forty-one years, called for three of 'Paradise Lost' in *ten*, and three of 'Prince Arthur' in *two*. "That 'Prince Arthur' found readers," says Johnson, "is certain; for in two years it had three editions; a very uncommon instance of favourable reception, at a time when literary curiosity was yet confined to particular classes of the nation." But it was no uncommon instance, for the same age demanded edition after edition of Cowley, Waller, Flatman, and Sprat. There was no paucity of readers for particular books: the sale of 'Paradise Lost' was slow because it was not to the taste of the times: our very plays were in rhyme; and the public looked with wonder on Shakespeare when improved by Shadwell, Ravenscroft, and Tate.

But Blackmore, who wrote when literary curiosity was yet confined, if we may believe Johnson, to particular classes of the nation, has told us in an acknowledged work, that 'Paradise Lost' *lay many years unspoken of and entirely disregarded*. No better testimony could possibly be wished for. "It must be acknowledged," says Sir Richard Blackmore, "that till about

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton surveyed the silent progress of his work, and marked its

forty years ago [he is writing in 1716] Great Britain was barren of critical learning, though fertile in excellent writers; and in particular had so little taste for epic poetry, and were so unacquainted with the essential properties and peculiar beauties of it, that 'Paradise Lost,' an admirable work of that kind, published by Mr. Milton, the great ornament of his age and country, lay many years unspoken of and entirely disregarded, till at length it happened that some persons of greater delicacy and judgment found out the merit of that excellent poem, and by communicating their sentiments to their friends, propagated the esteem of the author, who soon acquired universal applause."*

"Never any poet," writes Dennis, "left a greater reputation behind him than Mr. Cowley, while Milton remained obscure, and known but to few."† And the same observant writer remarks in another place "that 'Paradise Lost' had been printed forty years before it was known to the greatest part of England that there barely was such a book." "When Milton first published his famous poem," Swift writes to Sir Charles Wogan, "the first edition was long going off; few either read, liked, or understood it, and it gained ground merely by its merit."

"We know," writes Barton Booth to Aaron Hill, "what reception 'Paradise Lost' met with in the author's life-time." "'Tis well known," says Dr. Arbuthnot, "that Milton went off at first very slowly."‡

"It was," writes Hughes to Lord Somers, "your lordship's encouraging a beautiful edition of 'Paradise Lost' that first brought that incomparable poem to be generally known and esteemed."§ Hughes refers to the subscription folio of 1688. Whatever Somers did, 'Paradise Lost' had no large sale till Philips published his 'Splendid Shilling,' and Addison explained its beauties in 'The Spectator.'

True it is that it had been called by Dryden in 1675, when its author was but newly in his grave, "one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems which either the age or nation has produced;"‖ and that this was said by the most popular of living poets, and the critic whose decisions were looked up to by the town; nay more, that the same great writer repeatedly published his high approval, and, better still, in 1688, turned his glorious epigram in its praise. Nor was Dryden alone in his love for Milton; the Earl of Roscommon, who died in 1685, and whose example would make many followers, had written in Milton's measure and manner. But all were not of this way of thinking; and Rymer, who was in poetry what his name would denote, could speak of it in 1678 as "*that* 'Paradise Lost' of Milton's, which some are pleased to call a poem;"¶ and Prior and Montague, of its author, in 1687, as "a rough unhewn fellow, that a man must sweat to read him."**

But Rymer expressed the general feeling of his age; for Milton himself, says

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* Blackmore's Essays. 2 vols. 8vo., 1716.
† Dennis's Letters, pp. 174, 207. 8vo., 1721.
‡ Arbuthnot's Works, i. 110.
§ Spenser's Works, 12mo. 1715. Dedication.
‖ Prose Works by Malone, vol. ii. p. 397. In another place (vol. ii. p. 403) he puts Milton on the same footing with Homer, Virgil, and Tasso. This was in 1675.
¶ Letter to Fleetwood Shepherd on the Tragedies of the Last Age, p. 143.
** The Hind and the Panther Tranversed, &c. Bayes says, after quoting a liquid line, "I writ this line for the ladies, I hate such a rough unhewn fellow as Milton," &c.

reputation stealing its way in a kind of subterraneous current through fear and silence. I cannot but conceive him calm and confident, little disappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with steady consciousness, and waiting, without impatience, the vicissitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his studies, and supplied the want of sight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account :—

Mr. Philips tells us, "that though he had daily about him one or other to read, some persons of man's estate, who, of their own accord, greedily catched at the opportunity of being his readers, that they might as well reap the benefit of what they read to him, as oblige him by the benefit of their reading; others of younger years were sent by their parents to the same end: yet excusing only the eldest daughter, by reason of her bodily infirmity, and difficult utterance of speech (which, to say truth, I doubt was the principal cause of excusing her), the other two were condemned to the performance of reading, and exactly pronouncing of all the languages of whatever book he should, at one time or other, think fit to peruse, viz. the Hebrew (and I think the Syriac), the Greek, the Latin, the Italian,

Edmund Smith (account of John Philips), has been compared, in a very polite court, to the rumbling of a wheelbarrow. The truth is, as Sir Walter Scott has observed,* that the coldness with which Milton's mighty epic was received upon the first publication is "traceable to the character of its author, so obnoxious for his share in the government of Cromwell; to the turn of the language, so different from that of the age; and the seriousness of a subject so discordant with its lively frivolities." A Christian poem, that should have found its greatest admirers and received its warmest advancement from the Established Church, met there with open and avowed opposition. Milton encountered in the clergy that dislike which Sprat, when Dean of Westminster, professed to feel at the mention of his name,—a name too detestable, as he said, to be engraven on the walls of a Christian church. No poem ever appeared in an age less inclined to read, like, or understand it than did 'Paradise Lost.' And yet there was a large sale for clever religious books of all descriptions. Patrick's 'Pilgrim' went through *six* editions in 1678; and Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' at least two editions in the same year; and in 1682 had reached an eighth edition.

* Scott's Miscel. Prose Works, vol. i. p. 141.

Spanish, and French. All which sorts of books to be confined to read, without understanding one word, must needs be a trial of patience almost beyond endurance. Yet it was endured by both for a long time, though the irksomeness of this employment could not be always concealed, but broke out more and more into expressions of uneasiness; so that at length they were all (even the eldest also) sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture, that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold or silver."

In this scene of misery which this mode of intellectual labour sets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are most to be lamented. A language not understood can never be so read as to give pleasure, and very seldom so as to convey meaning. If few men would have had resolution to write books with such embarrassments, few likewise would have wanted ability to find some better expedient.

Three years after his 'Paradise Lost' he published [1670] his 'History of England,' comprising the whole fable of Geoffry of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invasion. Why he should have given the first part, which he seems not to believe, and which is universally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The style is harsh; but it has something of rough vigour, which perhaps may often strike, though it cannot please.

On this history the licenser again fixed his claws, and before he could transmit it to the press tore out several parts. Some censures of the Saxon monks were taken away, lest they should be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the Long Parliament, and Assembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the Earl of Anglesea, and which being afterwards published, has been since inserted in its proper place.[76]

The same year[77] were printed 'Paradise Regained,' and 'Samson Agonistes,' a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never designed by the author for the stage. As

[76] This remarkable 'digression,' as Milton calls it, was first printed in 1738.

[77] No,—in 1671.

these poems were published by another bookseller, it has been asked whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former. Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. Certainly, he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton showed 'Paradise Regained' to Ellwood, "This," said he, "is owing to you; for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of." [78]

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Ellwood relates, endure to hear 'Paradise Lost' preferred to 'Paradise Regained.' [79] Many causes may vitiate a writer's judgment of his own works. On that which has cost him much labour he sets a high value, because he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilsome efforts is considered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the last work, whatever it be, has necessarily most of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himself.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehension, that entitle this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dignity, which did not disdain the meanest services to literature. The epic poet, the controvertist, the politician, having already descended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the last years of his life, composed a book of logic for the initiation of students in philosophy, and published (1672) 'Artis Logicæ plenior Institutio ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata;' that is, 'A new Scheme of Logic, according to the Method of Ramus.' I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hostility against the

[78] Ellwood's 'Autobiography,' 8vo., 1714, p. 247.

[79] There is no such statement as this in Ellwood, but there is something like it in Philips (p. xxxix.), who says, "it ['Paradise Regained'] is generally censured to be much inferior to the other, though he could not hear with patience any such thing when related to him."

universities; for Ramus was one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools.

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published [1673] a 'Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery.'

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the Church of England, and an appeal to the Thirty-nine Articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The Papists appeal to other testimonies, and are, therefore, in his opinion, not to be permitted the liberty of either public or private worship; for though they plead conscience, *we have no warrant*, he says, *to regard conscience which is not grounded in Scripture.*

Those who are not convinced by his reasons may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman Catholic* is, he says, *one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular universal*, or *Catholic schismatic.*

He has, however, something better. As the best preservative against Popery, he recommends the diligent perusal of the Scriptures, a duty from which he warns the busy part of mankind not to think themselves excused.

He now [1673] reprinted his juvenile poems, with some additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of 'Familiar Epistles in Latin,' to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth; but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died, by a quiet and silent expiration,

about the 10th of November, 1674,[80] at his house in Bunhill-fields, and was buried next his father[81] in the chancel of St. Giles, at Cripplegate. His funeral was very splendidly and numerously attended.

Upon his grave there is supposed to have been no memorial; but in our time [1737] a monument has been erected in Westminster Abbey *To the Author of* '*Paradise Lost*,' by Mr. Benson, who has in the inscription bestowed more words upon himself than upon Milton.[82]

When the inscription for the monument of Philips, in which he was said to be *soli Miltono secundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Westminster, he refused to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too detestable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who succeeded him, being author of the inscription, permitted its reception. "And such has been the change of public opinion," said Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have seen erected in the church a statue[83] of that man whose name I once knew considered as a pollution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, so as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the fore-top, and hung down upon his shoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroic stature, but rather below the middle size, according to Mr. Richardson, who mentions him as having narrowly escaped from being *short and thick*.[84] He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exercise of the sword, in which he is related to have been eminently skilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-sword, of which he recommends the use in his book on Education.

[80] On Sunday the 8th of November.

[81] The father, according to Aubrey, died in 1647.

[82] On poets' tombs see Benson's titles writ.

POPE: *The Dunciad*, Book iii.

[83] Dr. Gregory should have said a bust. Sprat made a somewhat similar objection to an intended epitaph on Shadwell, "as being too great an encomium on plays to be set up in a church."

[84] Richardson's 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo., 1734, p. ii.

His eyes are said never to have been bright; but, if he was a dexterous fencer, they must have been once quick.[85]

His domestic habits, so far as they are known, were those of a severe student. He drank little strong drink of any kind, and fed without excess in quantity, and in his earlier years without delicacy of choice. In his youth he studied late at night; but afterwards changed his hours, and rested in bed from nine to four in the summer, and five in the winter. The course of his day was best known after he was blind. When he first rose he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then studied till twelve; then took some exercise for an hour; then dined, then played on the organ and sung, or heard another sing; then studied to six; then entertained his visitors till eight; then supped; and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glass of water, went to bed.

So is his life described; but this even tenour appears attainable only in colleges. He that lives in the world will sometimes have the succession of his practice broken and confused. Visitors, of whom Milton is represented to have had great numbers, will come and stay unseasonably; business, of which every man has some, must be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to rise early he had something read

[85] The best portrait of Milton is that drawn and engraved by Faithorne, prefixed to 'Milton's History of Britain,' 1670, 4to. Faithorne's original drawing is preserved with other portraits belonging to Tonson (including the Kit-Kat collection) at Bayfordbury, near Hertford, the seat of Mr. Baker. The engraving made by Marshall for 'Milton's Poems,' 1645, will always be looked upon with interest, from the wicked epigram on the engraver which the poet has placed immediately beneath it. Of the pictures of Milton, none are of much value either as portraits or works of art. The miniature attributed to Cooper, and bequeathed by Sir Joshua Reynolds to Mason the poet, has a poor genealogy, and a poorer resemblance to received likenesses. The Stanhope and Hollis portrait (assigned conjecturally to Jansen) should be a great curiosity, but I have never seen it. The Charles Lamb and Moxon portrait is a striking likeness of the poet, and is an old picture, though there is no proof that the poet ever sat for it. The "compound" portrait, engraved by Richardson and prefixed to his 'Explanatory Notes,' 1734, is too ideal to be of much consideration. It was Richardson's pleasure to concoct a portrait of Milton as he appeared to be in the eyes of this gentle enthusiast. Every spectator can invest a literal likeness with an ideal beauty. Posthumous additions of this kind are only impertinences at the best.

to him by his bedside; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He composed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.[86]

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his personal estate to the parliament; but when, after the contest was decided, he solicited repayment, he met not only with neglect, but *sharp rebuke;* and, having tired both himself and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeless indignation, till he showed how able he was to do greater service. He was then made Latin secretary, with two hundred pounds a-year;[87] and had a thousand pounds for his 'Defence of the People.'[88] His widow, who after his death retired to Nantwich, in Cheshire, and died about 1729,[89] is said to have reported that he lost two thousand pounds by entrusting it to a scrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had grasped an estate of about sixty pounds a-year belonging to Westminster Abbey, which, like other sharers of the plunder of rebellion, he was afterwards obliged to return. Two thousand pounds, which he had placed in the Excise-Office, were also lost.[90] There is yet no reason to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants, being few, were competently supplied. He sold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds,[91] on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.[92]

His literature was unquestionably great. He read all the

[86] Richardson's 'Explanatory Notes,' &c., 8vo. 1734, p. cxiv.

[87] As Secretary to the Council he enjoyed, while without an associate in the office, the annual sum of nearly three hundred pounds, a sum which was lowered when Philip Meadowes and Andrew Marvell were his fellow-secretaries.—TODD: *Life of Milton,* ed. 1852, p. 161.

His successor in the office was Sir Richard Fanshaw.

[88] Compare Note at p. 103.

[89] Her will, in which she gives whatever she had to her nephews and nieces in Nantwich, without even calling any of them by their names, is dated August 27, 1727, and was proved on the 10th October, 1727. She died therefore between those dates.

[90] Philips, 1694, p. xliii.

[91] Ibid.

[92] See Milton's Will, p. 166.

languages which are considered either as learned or polite; Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spanish. In Latin his skill was such as places him in the first rank of writers and critics; and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who used to read to him, represented him as most delighting, after Homer, which he could almost repeat, were Ovid's Metamorphoses and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindness, now in my hands:[93] the margin is sometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.[94]

Of the English poets he set most value upon Spenser, Shakespeare, and Cowley. Spenser was apparently his favourite: Shakespeare he may easily be supposed to like, with every skilful reader; but I should not have expected that Cowley, whose ideas of excellence were different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who sometimes visited him, was, that he was a good rhymist, but no poet.[95]

His theological opinions are said to have been first Calvinistical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Presbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianism. In the

[93] Milton was a reader of Euripides, not only with the taste of a poet, but with the minuteness of a Greek critic. His 'Euripides,' in two volumes, Paul Stephens's quarto edition, 1602, with many marginal emendations in his own hand, is now [1791] the property of Mr. Cradock, of Gumley, in Leicestershire. From the library of the learned Bishop Hare, who died in 1740, it passed into the shop of John Whiston the bookseller; whence it was purchased by Dr. Birch, the publisher of Milton's prose works, April 12, 1754. It has Milton's name, with the price of the book, viz., 12*s.* 6*d.*; also the date, 1634—all in his own hand. Some of the marginal notes have been adopted by Joshua Barnes in his 'Euripides;' others have been lately printed by Mr. Jodrell.—T. Warton: *Milton's Poems*, p. 569.

Mr. Cradock gave this valuable volume to Sir Henry Halford.

[94] His copy of 'Aratus' (Par. Morell, 1559) was sold at Sotheby and Wilkinson's, in January, 1850, for 40*l.* 10*s.*, and is now in the British Museum. It has his name in it: "Jo. Milton, Pre. 2*s.* 6*d.*, 1631;" the quotation from Ovid, "Cum sole et luna semper Aratus erit;" and a few marginal notes, also in Milton's handwriting.

[95] Jo. Dreyden, Esq., Poet Laureate, who very much admired him, and went to him to have leave to putt his Paradise Lost into a drama in rhymes. Mr. Milton received him civilly, and told him he would give him leave to tagg his verses.—Aubrey's *Lives*, iii. 444.

mixed questions of theology and government he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery or prelacy; but what Baudius says of Erasmus seems applicable to him—*magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur.* He had determined rather what to condemn, than what to approve. He has not associated himself with any denomination of Protestants: we know rather what he was not than what he was. He was not of the Church of Rome; he was not of the Church of England.[96]

To be of no Church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are distant, and which is animated only by faith and hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unless it be invigorated and reimpressed by external ordinances, by stated calls to worship, and the salutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had a full conviction of the truth of Christianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundest veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occasional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any visible worship. In the distribution of his hours there was no hour of prayer, either solitary or with his household; omitting public prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omission the reason has been sought upon a supposition, which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and justify their conduct to themselves. Prayer certainly was not thought superfluous by him who represents our first parents as praying acceptably in the state of innocence, and efficaciously after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be affirmed; his studies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himself, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

[96] Milton's theological opinions were determined in 1823 by the discovery in the State Paper Office of his 'Treatise on Christian Doctrine,' written in Latin, and printed in 1824 by command of George IV. (See p. 107.) Milton was an Arian. "It is said that the discovery of Milton's Arianism in this rigid generation has already impaired the sale of 'Paradise Lost.'"—*Hallam's Lit. Hist.* iii. 474, third ed.

His political notions were those of an acrimonious and surly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reason than that *a popular government was the most frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would set up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is surely very shallow policy that supposes money to be the chief good; and even this, without considering that the support and expense of a Court is, for the most part, only a particular kind of traffic, for which money is circulated without any national impoverishment.

Milton's republicanism was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatness, and a sullen desire of independence; in petulance impatient of control, and pride disdainful of superiority. He hated monarchs in the State, and prelates in the Church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be suspected that his predominant desire was to destroy rather than establish, and that he felt not so much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been observed that they who most loudly clamour for liberty do not most liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character in domestic relations is that he was severe and arbitrary. His family consisted of women; and there appears in his books something like a Turkish contempt of females, as subordinate and inferior beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he suffered them to be depressed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family some account may be expected. His sister, first married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. [Thomas] Agar, a friend of her first husband, who succeeded him in the Crown Office.[97] She had by her first husband Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine,[98] and a son, Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the

[97] The Crown Office of the Court of Chancery.

[98] Sir Christopher Milton was buried in the church of St. Nicholas, Ipswich, March 22, 1692. His daughters, Mary and Catherine, were living at Holloway

Crown Office, and left a daughter living in 1749, in Grosvenor Street.[99]

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clarke, a weaver in Spitalfields, and lived seventy-six years, to August, 1727. This is the daughter of whom public mention has been made. She could repeat the first lines of Homer, the Metamorphoses, and some of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a stand. Many repetitions are necessary to fix in memory lines not understood; and why should Milton wish or want to hear them so often? These lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not understood, the beginning raises no more attention than the end; and, as those that understand it know commonly the beginning best, its rehearsal will seldom be necessary. It is not likely that Milton required any passage to be so much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he desired the initial lines to be read at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal sounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addison made a present, and promised some establishment, but died soon after. Queen Caroline sent her fifty guineas.[100] She had seven sons and three daughters,

about the year 1734. Their parentage was known to few; and their names were corrupted into Melton.

[99] She died 26th July, 1769, housekeeper to Dr. Secker.

[100] *George Vertue to Mr. Charles Christian (Seal Engraver).*

Mr. Christian,—Pray inform my Lord Harley [afterwards Edward Earl of Oxford] that I have on Thursday last seen the daughter of Milton, the poet. I carried with me two or three different prints of Milton's picture, which she immediately knew to be like her father; and told me her mother-in-law (if living, in Cheshire) had two pictures of him; one when he was a schoolboy, and the other when he was about twenty. She knows of no other picture of him, because she was several years in Ireland, both before and after his death. She was the youngest of Milton's daughters by his first wife, and was taught to read to her father several languages.

Mr. Addison was desirous to see her once, and desired she would bring with

but none of them had any children, except her son Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the East Indies, and had two sons, of whom nothing is now known.[101] Elizabeth married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spitalfields, and had seven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Holloway, and afterwards in Cock-lane, near Shoreditch church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harshness to his daughters, and his refusal to have them taught to write ; and, in opposition to other accounts, represented him as delicate, though temperate in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, 'Comus' was played [at Drury Lane] for her benefit. She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gaiety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds,[102] though Dr. Newton brought a large

her testimonials of being Milton's daughter; but as soon as she came into the room he told her she needed none, her face having much of the likeness of the pictures he had seen of him.

For my part I find the features of her face very much like the prints. I showed her the painting I have to engrave, which she believes not to be her father's picture, it being of a brown complexion and black hair, and curled locks. On the contrary, he was of a fair complexion, a little red in his cheeks, and light brown hair.

GEORGE VERTUE.

—*Gent.'s Mag. for* 1776, p. 200.

[101] It appears from an examination of the parish register of Fort St. George that Caleb Clarke, who seems to have been parish-clerk of that place from 1717 to 1719, was buried there on the 26th of October of the latter year. By his wife Mary, whose original surname does not appear, he had three children born at Madras:—Abraham, baptized on the 2nd of June, 1703; Mary, baptized on the 17th of March, 1706, and buried on December the 15th of the same year; and Isaac, baptized the 13th of February, 1711. Of Isaac no further account appears. Abraham, the great-grandson of Milton, in September, 1725, married Anna Clarke; and the baptism of his daughter, Mary Clarke, is registered on the 2nd of April, 1727. With her all notices of this family cease. But as neither he nor any of his family, nor his brother Isaac, died at Madras, and as he was only twenty-four years of age at the baptism of his daughter, it is probable that the family migrated to some other part of India, and that some trace of them might yet be discovered by examination of the parish-registers of Calcutta and Bombay.—*Edinburgh Review*, No. 50.

See also Cibber's 'Lives of the Poets,' ii. 141.

[102] Johnson has stated the profits and subscriptions. The receipts of the house were 147*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.*, from which 80*l.* had to be deducted for expenses.

contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonson,[103] a man who is to be praised as often as he is named. Of this sum one hundred pounds were placed in the stocks, after some debate between her and her husband in whose name it should be entered; and the rest augmented their little stock, with which they removed to Islington.[104] This was the greatest benefaction that 'Paradise Lost' ever procured the author's descendants; and to this he who has now attempted to relate his Life had the honour of contributing a prologue.[105]

In the examination of Milton's poetical works I shall pay so

[103] This was not the great Jacob, who died 18th March, 1735–6, aged 80, nor Jacob his nephew and partner, who died before him at Barnes, 25th Nov. 1735, but Jacob, *old* Jacob's great-nephew, who died 31st March, 1767. "The late amiable Mr. Tonson" of Johnson's 'Life of Dryden' was Richard Tonson, M.P. for New Windsor, who died 9th October, 1772.

[104] She survived this benefit but three years, and died childless, 9th May, 1754, at Islington, in her sixty-sixth year.

[105] On the day preceding the performance Johnson published a letter in 'The General Advertiser,' recommending the performance to public attention. See it in 'Boswell by Croker,' p. 72, ed. 1848.

"1749–50, January 6.—I visited Mrs. Foster, grand-daughter to Milton, who keeps a chandler's shop in Cock Lane, near Shoreditch Church, where she told me she had lived about a year, having lived about seven years in Lower Holloway, after removing from Pelham Street, Spitalfields, where I saw her in February, 1737–8. Her brother, Mr. Clarke, died at her house at Lower Holloway, as did likewise, at above ninety years of age, her cousin Mrs. Milton, niece of Milton, and daughter of his brother Sir Christopher Milton. I presented her five guineas from Mr. Yorke. She showed me her grandmother's Bible, in octavo, printed by Young in 1636, on a blank leaf of which Milton has entered, with his own hands, the births of his children as follows:—

Anne, my daughter, was born July the 29th, the day of the Monthly Fast, between six and seven, or about half an hour after six: she living 1646.

Mary, my daughter, was born on Wednesday, October 25, on the Fast Day, in the morning, about six o'clock, 1645.

My son, John, was born on Sunday, March the 16th, at about half an hour past nine at night, 1650.

My daughter Deborah was born the 2nd of May, being Sunday, somewhat before three of the clock in the morning, 1652.

In his wife's writing:—I am the book of Mary Milton.

Dr. Newton had been with her, and given her a guinea, some time ago; Mr. Lauder lately, and Dr. Foster within these four days. She told me that her great-uncle, Sir Christopher Milton, had, besides his two daughters who died unmarried, and had lived at Highgate for many years, another, who was married to Mr. Pendlebury, a clergyman."—Dr. Birch: *Additional MSS. in the Museum*, 4244, p. 53.

much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he seems to have had a degree of fondness not very laudable; what he has once written he resolves to preserve, and gives to the public an unfinished poem, which he broke off because he was *nothing satisfied with what he had done*, supposing his readers less nice than himself. These preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and English. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to speak as a critic; but I have heard them commended by a man[106] well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are lusciously elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquisite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of sentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excel the odes; and some of the exercises on 'Gunpowder Treason' might have been spared.

The English poems, though they make no promises of 'Paradise Lost,' have this evidence of genius, that they have a cast original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence: if they differ from verses of others, they differ for the worse; for they are too often distinguished by repulsive harshness; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleasing; the rhymes and epithets seem to be laboriously sought, and violently applied.

That in the early parts of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuscripts, happily preserved at Cambridge, in which many of his smaller works are found as they were first written, with the subsequent corrections. Such relics show how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with ease we must learn first to do with diligence.

Those who admire the beauties of this great poet sometimes force their own judgment into false approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themselves to think that admirable which is only singular. All that short compositions can commonly attain is neatness and elegance. Milton never learned

[106] I presume Baretti.

the art of doing little things with grace;[107] he overlooked the milder excellence of suavity and softness; he was a *lion* that had no skill *in dandling the kid.*

One of the poems on which much praise has been bestowed is 'Lycidas,' of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain,[108] and the numbers unpleasing. What beauty there is we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough *satyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel.*[109] Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief.[110]

[107] If by little things we are to understand short poems, Milton had the art of giving them another sort of excellence.—T. Warton: *Milton's Minor Poems,* p. 282.

[108] "The previous rhyme in Milton's 'Lycidas' is very frequently placed at such a distance from the following that it is often dropt by the memory (much better employed in attending to the sentiment) before it be brought to join its partner; and this seems to be the greatest objection to that kind of versification. But then the peculiar ease and variety it admits of are no doubt sufficient to overbalance the objection, and give it the preference to any other, in an elegy of length."—Shenstone: *Pref. Essay on Elegy.*

[109] In 'Lycidas' there is perhaps more poetry than sorrow. But let us read it for its poetry. It is true that passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough satyrs with cloven heel. But poetry does this; and in the hands of Milton does it with a peculiar and irresistible charm.—T. Warton: *Milton's Minor Poems,* p. 36.

[110] Nothing speaks our grief so well
As to speak nothing.

Crashaw.

Where there is fiction, there is no passion: he that describes himself as a shepherd, and his Neæra or Delia as a shepherdess, and talks of goats and lambs, feels no passion. He that courts his mistress with Roman imagery deserves to lose her; for she may with good reason suspect his sincerity.—Johnson: *Life of Hammond.*

It has been said that "where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief." In general this may be true; in the case of Milton its truth may be doubted. . . . Bishop Andrews said his prayers in Greek: who would on that account doubt the sincerity of the great scholar's devotion? Milton lamented his friend in the language of romance: who would on that account deny that the poet's sorrow was unfeigned? Men act and speak under suffering agreeably to the manner in which they act and speak in general. Cicero was by habit a reader and writer of philosophy; and therefore when his daughter dies he

In this poem there is no nature, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a pastoral, easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting; whatever images it can supply are long ago exhausted,[111] and its inherent improbability always forces dissatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey, that they studied together, it is easy to suppose how much he must miss the companion of his labours, and the partner of his discoveries; but what image of tenderness can be excited by these lines?[112]

> "We drove a field, and both together heard
> What time the grey fly winds her sultry horn,
> Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night."

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the representation may be allegorical, the true meaning is so uncertain and remote that it is never sought because it cannot be known when it is found.

Among the flocks, and copses, and flowers, appear the heathen deities—Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, such as a college easily supplies. Nothing can less display knowledge, or less exercise inventions, than to tell how a shepherd has lost his companion, and must now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his skill in piping; and how one god asks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no sympathy; he who thus praises will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a grosser fault. With these trifling fictions

gives vent to his grief by studying philosophical treatises on that affection of the mind. Marmontel was, by habit, a reader and writer of plays; and therefore when he loses his favourite child, and witnesses the affliction of his wife, he betakes himself to composing (so he tells us), as an analogous subject, the Opera of 'Penelope.' The one acted like a Roman, the other like a Frenchman; yet the distress of both parents was no doubt sincere.—SOUTHEY: *Quarterly Review*, xxxvi. 46-7.

[111] This is not strictly true. There is imagery in 'Lycidas,' and that of a high kind, entirely new to English poetry.

[112] I know not if Cowley has more tenderness; I am sure he has less poetry. —T. WARTON: *Milton's Minor Poems*, p. 36.

are mingled the most awful and sacred truths, such as ought never to be polluted with such irreverend combinations. The shepherd likewise is now a feeder of sheep, and afterwards an ecclesiastical pastor, a superintendent of a Christian flock. Such equivocations are always unskilful; but here they are indecent, and at least approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conscious.

Such is the power of reputation justly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read 'Lycidas' with pleasure had he not known its author.

Of the two pieces, 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,' I believe opinion is uniform; every man that reads them reads them with pleasure. The author's design is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to show how objects derive their colours from the mind, by representing the operation of the same things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the same man as he is differently disposed; but rather how, among the successive variety of appearances, every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified.

The *cheerful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *pensive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *cheerful* man sees the cock strut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks, *not unseen*, to observe the glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milkmaid, and view the labours of the ploughman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*, or by a lonely lamp outwatches the north star, to discover the habitation of separate souls, and varies the shades of meditation by contemplating the magnificent or pathetic scenes

of tragic and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some music played by aërial performers.[113]

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast, that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. The seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity, nor the gaiety from the pleasures of the bottle.[114]

The man of *cheerfulness*, having exhausted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with scenes of splendour gay assemblies and nuptial festivities; but he mingles a mere spectator, as, when the learned comedies of Jonson or the wild dramas of Shakespeare are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *pensive* man never loses himself in crowds, but walks the cloister, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forsaken the Church.

Both his characters delight in music; but he seems to think that cheerful notes would have obtained from Pluto a complete dismission of Eurydice, of whom solemn sounds only procured a conditional release.

For the old age of Cheerfulness he makes no provision; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the close of life. His cheerfulness is without levity, and his pensiveness without asperity.

Through these two poems the images are properly selected, and nicely distinguished; but the colours of the diction seem not sufficiently discriminated. I know not whether the characters are kept sufficiently apart. No mirth can indeed be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet

[113] Never were fine imagery and fine imagination so marred, mutilated, and impoverished by a cold, unfeeling, and imperfect representation: to say nothing that Johnson confounds two descriptions.—T. WARTON: *Milton's Minor Poems*, p. 85.

[114] Milton's 'Mirth' is the offspring not of Bacchus and Venus, but of Zephyr and Aurora.

some melancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.

The greatest of his juvenile performances is the 'Masque of Comus,' in which may very plainly be discovered the dawn or twilight of 'Paradise Lost.' Milton appears to have formed very early that system of diction, and mode of verse, which his maturer judgment approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor desired to deviate.

Nor does 'Comus' afford only a specimen of his language; it exhibits likewise his power of description and his vigour of sentiment employed in the praise and defence of virtue. A work more truly poetical is rarely found; allusions, images, and descriptive epithets, embellish almost every period with lavish decoration. As a series of lines, therefore, it may be considered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A masque, in those parts where supernatural intervention is admitted, must indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, so far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reasonable, which can hardly be said of the conduct of the two brothers, who, when their sister sinks with fatigue in a pathless wilderness, wander both away together in search of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpless Lady to all the sadness and danger of solitude. This however is a defect overbalanced by its convenience.

What deserves more reprehension is, that the prologue spoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addressed to the audience; a mode of communication so contrary to the nature of dramatic representation, that no precedents can support it.

The discourse of the Spirit is too long—an objection that may be made to almost all the following speeches; they have not the sprightliness of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but seem rather declamations deliberately composed, and formally repeated, on a moral question. The auditor therefore listens as to a lecture, without passion, without anxiety.

The song of Comus has airiness and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleasure are so general, that they excite no distinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following soliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The song must owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At last the Brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared lest their sister should be in danger, and hoped that she is not in danger, the Elder makes a speech in praise of chastity, and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philosopher.

Then descends the Spirit in form of a shepherd, and the Brother, instead of being in haste to ask his help, praises his singing, and inquires his business in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the Brother is taken with a short fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the Brother moralises again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no use because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good being.

In all these parts the language is poetical, and the sentiments are generous; but there is something wanting to allure attention.

The dispute between the Lady and Comus is the most animated and affecting scene of the drama, and wants nothing but a brisker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention and detain it.

The songs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harsh in their diction, and not very musical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic style, inelegantly splendid, and tediously instructive.[115]

The 'Sonnets' were written in different parts of Milton's

[115] On the whole, whether 'Comus' be or be not deficient as a drama, whether it is considered as an epic drama, a series of lines, a mask, or a poem, I am of opinion that Milton is here only inferior to his own 'Paradise Lost.'—T. WARTON: *Milton's Minor Poems*, p. 263.

life, upon different occasions. They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and twenty-first are truly entitled to this slender commendation. The fabric of a sonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never succeeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.[116]

Those little pieces may be despatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine 'Paradise Lost;' a poem which, considered with respect to design, may claim the first place, and with respect to performance, the second, among the productions of the human mind.

By the general consent of critics the first praise of genius is due to the writer of an epic poem, as it requires an assemblage of all the powers which are singly sufficient for other compositions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason. Epic poetry undertakes to teach the most important truths by the most pleasing precepts, and therefore relates some great event in the most affecting manner. History must supply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he must improve and exalt by a nobler art, must animate by dramatic energy, and diversify by retrospection and anticipation; morality must teach him the exact bounds, and different shades, of vice and virtue; from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the discriminations of character, and the tendency of the passions, either single or combined; and physiology must supply him with illustrations and images. To put these materials to poetical use, is required an imagination capable of painting nature and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extension of his language, distinguished all the delicacies of phrase, and all the colours of words, and

[116] Mrs. Kennicott related in his presence a lively saying of Dr. Johnson to Miss Hannah More, who had expressed a wonder that the poet who had written 'Paradise Lost' should write such poor sonnets—"Milton, Madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon cherry stones."—*Boswell by Croker*, p. 765.

learned to adjust their different sounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.[117]

Bossu is of opinion that the poet's first work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illustrate and establish. This seems to have been the process only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and consequent;[118] in Milton's only it is essential and intrinsic. His purpose was the most useful and the most arduous; *to vindicate the ways of God to man;* to show the reasonableness of religion, and the necessity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral, there must be a *fable*, a narration artfully constructed, so as to excite curiosity, and surprise expectation. In this part of his work Milton must be confessed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and those that were to follow it: he has interwoven the whole system of theology with such propriety, that every part appears to be necessary; and scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the progress of the main action.

The subject of an epic poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the destruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His subject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion against the Supreme King, raised by the highest order of created beings; the overthrow of their host, and the punishment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reasonable creatures; their original happiness and innocence, their

[117] In a poet no kind of knowledge is to be overlooked—to a poet nothing can be useless. Whatever is beautiful and whatever is dreadful must be familiar to his imagination; he must be conversant with all that is awfully vast, or elegantly little. The plants of the garden, the animals of the wood, the minerals of the earth, the meteors of the sky, must all concur to store his mind with inexhaustible variety; for every idea is useful for the enforcement of moral or religious truth; and he who knows most will have most power of diversifying his scenes, and of gratifying his reader with remote allusions and unexpected instruction.—JOHNSON: *Rasselas.*

[118] A moral should be wrought into the body and soul, the matter and tendency of a poem, not tagged to the end like a "God send the good ship into harbour" at the conclusion of our bills of lading.—CHARLES LAMB *to Southey*, March 15, 1799.

forfeiture of immortality, and their restoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be hastened or retarded only by persons of elevated dignity. Before the greatness displayed in Milton's poem, all other greatness shrinks away. The weakest of his agents are the highest and noblest of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whose actions the elements consented; on whose rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the state of terrestrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are such as it is irreverence to name on slight occasions. The rest were lower powers;

> "—— of which the least could wield
> Those elements, and arm him with the force
> Of all their regions;"

powers which only the control of Omnipotence restrains from laying creation waste, and filling the vast expanse of space with ruin and confusion. To display the motives and actions of beings thus superior, so far as human reason can examine them, or human imagination represent them, is the task which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In the examination of epic poems much speculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the 'Paradise Lost,' which admit of examination, are those of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and sinful state.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of easy condescension and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may seem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occasionally, and act as every incident requires; the solitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diversified. To Satan, as Addison observes, such sentiments are given as suit *the most exalted and most depraved being*. Milton has been

censured by Clarke[119] for the impiety which sometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he justly remarks, which no observation of character can justify, because no good man would willingly permit them to pass, however transiently, through his own mind. To make Satan speak as a rebel, without any such expressions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the greatest difficulties in Milton's undertaking, and I cannot but think that he has extricated himself with great happiness. There is in Satan's speeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The language of rebellion cannot be the same with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtiness and obstinacy; but his expressions are commonly general, and no otherwise offensive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celestial rebellion are very judiciously discriminated in the first and second books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact consistency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, such sentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repasts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil. Their addresses to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to ask; and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter distrust and discord, mutual accusation, and stubborn self-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their transgression. At last they seek shelter in his mercy, soften to repentance, and melt in supplication. Both before and after the Fall the superiority of Adam is diligently sustained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epic poem which immerge the critic in deep consideration, the ‘Paradise Lost’ requires little to be said. It contains the history of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it displays

[119] Author of the ‘Essay on Study.’—JOHNSON.

the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being; the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The substance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like necessity, superior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to everything human, some slight exceptions may be made. But the main fabric is immoveably supported.

It is justly remarked by Addison, that this poem has, by the nature of its subject, the advantage above all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the same relation to Adam and to Eve, and must partake of that good and evil which extend to themselves.

Of the *machinery*, so called from Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occasional interposition of supernatural power, another fertile topic of critical remarks, here is no room to speak, because everything is done under the immediate and visible direction of Heaven; but the rule is so far observed, that no part of the action could have been accomplished by any other means.

Of *episodes*, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's prophetic account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was necessary to Adam as a warning, the other as a consolation.

To the completeness or *integrity* of the design nothing can be objected; it has distinctly and clearly what Aristotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the same length, from which so little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long description of a shield. The short digressions at the beginning of the third, seventh, and ninth books might doubtless be spared; but superfluities so beautiful, who would take away? or who does not wish that the author of the 'Iliad' had gratified succeeding ages with a little knowledge of himself? Perhaps no passages are more frequently or more attentively read than those extrinsic paragraphs; and, since the end

of poetry is pleasure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleased.

The questions, whether the action of the poem be strictly *one*, whether the poem can be properly termed *heroic*, and who is the hero, are raised by such readers as draw their principles of judgment rather from books than from reason. Milton, though he entitled 'Paradise Lost' only a *poem*, yet calls it himself *heroic song*. Dryden, petulantly and indecently, denies the heroism of Adam, because he was overcome;[120] but there is no reason why the hero should not be unfortunate, except established practice, since success and virtue do not go necessarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be suffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if success be necessary, Adam's deceiver was at last crushed; Adam was restored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may securely resume his human rank.

After the scheme and fabric of the poem, must be considered its component parts, the sentiments and the diction.

The *sentiments*, as expressive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are for the greater part unexceptionably just.

Splendid passages, containing lessons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur seldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that as it admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little assistance to human conduct. Its end is to raise the thoughts above sublunary cares or pleasures. Yet the praise of that fortitude with which Abdiel maintained his singularity of virtue against the scorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curiosity after the planetary motions, with the answer returned by Adam, may be confidently opposed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occasionally called forth in the pro-

[120] Spenser has a better plea [to be admitted to the file of heroic poets] for his 'Fairy Queen,' had his action been finished, or had been one; and Milton if the devil had not been his hero instead of Adam; if the giant had not foiled the knight and driven him out of his stronghold, to wander through the world with his lady errant, and if there had not been more machining persons than human in his poem.—DRYDEN: *Ded. of Æneid*, 1697.

gress are such as could only be produced by an imagination in the highest degree fervid and active, to which materials were supplied by incessant study and unlimited curiosity. The heat of Milton's mind might be said to sublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the spirit of science, unmingled with its grosser parts.

He had considered creation in its whole extent, and his descriptions are therefore learned. He had accustomed his imagination to unrestrained indulgence, and his conceptions therefore were extensive. The characteristic quality of his poem is sublimity. He sometimes descends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occasionally invest himself with grace; but his natural port is gigantic loftiness.[121] He can please when pleasure is required; but it is his peculiar power to astonish.

He seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that nature had bestowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of displaying the vast, illuminating the splendid, enforcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful; he therefore chose a subject on which too much could not be said, on which he might tire his fancy without the censure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not satiate his appetite of greatness. To paint things as they are requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to sport in the wide regions of possibility; reality was a scene too narrow for his mind. He sent his faculties out upon discovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of existence, and furnish sentiment and action to superior beings, to trace the counsels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds; he must sometimes revisit earth, and tell of things visible and known. When he cannot raise wonder by the sublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

[121] Algarotti terms it *gigantesca sublimità Miltoniana*.—JOHNSON.

Whatever be his subject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and descriptions of the scenes or operations of nature do not seem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freshness, raciness, and energy of immediate observation. He saw nature, as Dryden expresses it, *through the spectacles of books*;[122] and on most occasions calls learning to his assistance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of Enna, where Proserpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like Argo between the Cyanean rocks, or Ulysses between the two Sicilian whirlpools, when he shunned Charybdis on the *larboard*. The mythological allusions have been justly censured, as not being always used with notice of their vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exercise of the memory and the fancy.

His similes are less numerous and more various than those of his predecessors. But he does not confine himself within the limits of rigorous comparison: his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimensions which the occasion required. Thus, comparing the shield of Satan to the orb of the moon, he crowds the imagination with the discovery of the telescope, and all the wonders which the telescope discovers.

Of his moral sentiments it is hardly praise to affirm that they excel those of all other poets; for this superiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the sacred writings. The ancient epic poets, wanting the light of revelation, were very unskilful teachers of virtue: their principal characters may be great, but they are not amiable. The reader may rise from their works with a greater degree of active or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of justice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears that the advantages of even Christian knowledge may be possessed in vain. Ariosto's pravity is generally known; and though the 'Deliverance of

[122] He [Shakespeare] was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature.— DRYDEN: *Essay on Dramatic Poesy.*

Jerusalem' may be considered as a sacred subject, the poet has been very sparing of moral instruction.

In Milton every line breathes sanctity of thought and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious spirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their subjection to God, in such a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two; but those two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and submission. In their first state their affection is tender without weakness, and their piety sublime without presumption. When they have sinned, they show how discord begins in mutual frailty, and how it ought to cease in mutual forbearance, how confidence of the Divine favour is forfeited by sin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and prayer. A state of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed in our present misery it be possible to conceive it; but the sentiments and worship proper to a fallen and offending being we have all to learn, as we have all to practise.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors in their first state conversed with angels; even when folly and sin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean suitors;* and they rise again to reverential regard when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human passions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the 'Paradise Lost' little opportunity for the pathetic; but what little there is has not been lost. That passion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguish arising from the consciousness of transgression, and the horrors attending the sense of the Divine displeasure, are very justly described and forcibly impressed. But the passions are moved only on one occasion; sublimity is the general and prevailing quality of this poem; sublimity variously modified, sometimes descriptive, sometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of 'Paradise Lost'— for faults and defects every work of man must have — it is the business of

impartial criticism to discover. As, in displaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, because of selecting beauties there had been no end, I shall in the same general manner mention that which seems to deserve censure; for what Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my scheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better skilled in grammar than poetry, has often found, though he sometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtrusions of a reviser, whom the author's blindness obliged him to employ; a supposition rash and groundless if he thought it true, and vile and pernicious if, as is said, he in private allowed it to be false.

The plan of 'Paradise Lost' has this inconvenience, that it comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has therefore little natural curiosity or sympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's disobedience; we all sin like Adam, and like him must all bewail our offences: we have restless and insidious enemies in the fallen angels, and in the blessed spirits we have guardians and friends; in the redemption of mankind we hope to be included; in the description of heaven and hell we are surely interested, as we are all to reside hereafter either in the regions of horror or bliss.

But these truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our solitary thoughts and familiar conversation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raise no unaccustomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before, we cannot learn; what is not unexpected, cannot surprise.

Of the idea suggested by these awful scenes, from some we recede with reverence, except when stated hours require their

association; and from others we shrink with horror, or admit them only as salutary inflictions, as counterpoises to our interests and passions. Such images rather obstruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleasure and terror are indeed the genuine sources of poetry; but poetical pleasure must be such as human imagination can at least conceive, and poetical terrors such as human strength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind sinks under them in passive helplessness, content with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himself. Whoever considers the few radical positions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetic operation he expanded them to such extent, and ramified them to so much variety, restrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiousness of fiction.

Here is a full display of the united force of study and genius; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgment to digest, and fancy to combine them: Milton was able to select from nature, or from story, from an ancient fable, or from modern science, whatever could illustrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by study, and exalted by imagination.

It has been therefore said, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiasts, that in reading 'Paradise Lost' we read a book of universal knowledge.

But original deficience cannot be supplied. The want of human interest is always felt. 'Paradise Lost' is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. None ever wished it longer than it is. Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master and seek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's design is, that it requires the description of what cannot be described, the agency of spirits. He saw that immateriality supplied no images, and that he could not show angels acting but by instruments of action; he therefore invested them with form and matter. This, being necessary, was therefore defensible; and he should have secured the consistency of his system, by keeping immateriality out of sight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts.[123] But he has unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philosophy. His infernal and celestial powers are sometimes pure spirit, and sometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marle*, he has a body; when, in his passage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of sinking in the vacuity, and is supported by a gust of rising vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he seems to be mere spirit, that can penetrate matter at pleasure; when he *starts up in his own shape*, he has at least a determined form; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has *a spear and a shield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the arms of the contending angels are evidently material.[124]

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium, being *incorporeal spirits*, are *at large, though without number*, in a limited space: yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *crushed in upon their substance, now grown gross by sinning*. This likewise happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown the *sooner for their arms, for unarmed they might easily as spirits have evaded by contraction or remove*. Even as spirits they are hardly spiritual; for *contraction* and *remove* are images of matter; but if they could have escaped without their armour, they might have escaped

[123] This is easily said; but what if Milton could not seduce his readers to drop immateriality from their thoughts? What if the contrary opinion had taken so full a possession of the minds of men as to leave no room even for the half belief which poetry requires? Such we suspect to have been the case.—MACAULAY: *Essays (Milton)*.

[124] Mr. Hallam defends Milton from the censure of Johnson in this passage, but I cannot say successfully.—*Liter. of Europe*, iii. 478, 3rd ed.

from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a sun-beam, is material; Satan is material when he is afraid of the prowess of Adam.

The confusion of spirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity; and the book in which it is related is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.

After the operation of immaterial agents, which cannot be explained, may be considered that of allegorical persons, which have no real existence. To exalt causes into agents, to invest abstract ideas with form, and animate them with activity, has always been the right of poetry. But such airy beings are, for the most part, suffered only to do their natural office, and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a standard; but Fame and Victory can do more. To give them any real employment, or ascribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity. In the 'Prometheus' of Æschylus we see Violence and Strength, and in the 'Alcestis' of Euripides we see Death brought upon the stage, all as active persons of the drama; but no precedents can justify absurdity.

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portress of hell; but when they stop the journey of Satan, a journey described as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That Sin and Death should have shown the way to hell, might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the passage by building a bridge, because the difficulty of Satan's passage is described as real and sensible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell assigned to the rebellious spirits is described as not less local than the residence of man. It is placed in some distant part of space, separated from the regions of harmony and order by a chaotic waste and an unoccupied vacuity; but Sin and Death worked up a *mole* of *aggravated soil*, cemented with *asphaltus;* a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unskilful allegory appears to me one of the greatest faults of the poem; and to this there was no temptation but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative some objection may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradise, and is suffered to go away unmolested. The creation of man is represented as the consequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulsion of the rebels; yet Satan mentions it as a report *rife in heaven* before his departure.

To find sentiments for the state of innocence was very difficult; and something of anticipation perhaps is now and then discovered. Adam's discourse of dreams seems not to be the speculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his answer to the angel's reproof for curiosity does not want something of propriety; it is the speech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philosophical notions, especially when the philosophy is false, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a comparison, speaks of *timorous deer* before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could understand the comparison.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has some flats among his elevations.[125] This is only to say that all the parts are not equal. In every work one part must be for the sake of others; a palace must have passages; a poem must have transitions. It is no more to be required that wit should always be blazing than that the sun should always stand at noon. In a great work there is

[125] Milton's 'Paradise Lost' is admirable; but am I therefore bound to maintain that there are no flats among his elevations, when it is evident he creeps along sometimes for above a hundred lines together?—DRYDEN: *Pref. to Second Miscellany*, 1685.

It is true he runs into a flat of thought sometimes for a hundred lines together, but it is when he has got into a track of Scripture.—DRYDEN: *Ded. of Juvenal*, 1693.

> Milton's strong pinion now not Heaven can bound,
> Now serpent-like in prose he sweeps the ground;
> In quibbles, angel and archangel join,
> And God the Father turns a school-divine.
>
> POPE: *To Augustus.*

a vicissitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a succession of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the sky, may be allowed sometimes to revisit earth; for what other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long?

Milton, being well versed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them; and as every man catches something from his companions, his desire of imitating Ariosto's levity has disgraced his work with the 'Paradise of Fools'—a fiction not in itself ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often; his equivocations, which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients; his unnecessary and ungraceful use of terms of art, it is not necessary to mention, because they are easily remarked, and generally censured, and at last bear so little proportion to the whole that they scarcely deserve the attention of a critic.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance 'Paradise Lost,' which he who can put in balance with its beauties must be considered not as nice but as dull, as less to be censured for want of candour, than pitied for want of sensibility.

Of 'Paradise Regained,' the general judgment seems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and everywhere instructive. It was not to be supposed that the writer of 'Paradise Lost' could ever write without great effusions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wisdom. The basis of 'Paradise Regained' is narrow: a dialogue without action can never please like an union of the narrative and dramatic powers. Had this poem been written not by Milton, but by some imitator, it would have claimed and received universal praise.

If 'Paradise Regained' has been too much depreciated, 'Samson Agonistes' has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton that a drama can be praised in which the

intermediate parts have neither cause nor consequence, neither hasten nor retard the catastrophe.

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many just sentiments and striking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatic writing;[126] he knew human nature only in the gross, and had never studied the shades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending, passions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach, but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience must confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *diction*, a mode and cast of expression which bears little resemblance to that of any former writer, and which is so far removed from common use that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprised by a new language.

This novelty has been, by those who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words suitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, says

[126] The imitators of *Milton*, like most other imitators, are not *copies*, but *caricatures* of their original; they are a hundred times more obsolete and cramp than he, and equally so in all places; whereas it should have been observed of *Milton* that he is not lavish of his exotic words and phrases everywhere alike, but employs them much more where the subject is marvellous, vast, and strange, as in the scenes of heaven, hell, chaos, &c., than where it is turned to the natural and agreeable, as in the pictures of Paradise, the loves of our first parents, the entertainments of angels, and the like. In general this unusual style better serves to awaken our ideas in the descriptions and in the imaging and picturesque parts than it agrees with the lower sort of narrations, the character of which is simplicity and purity. *Milton* has several of the latter, where we find not an antiquated, affected, or uncouth word for some hundred lines together, as in his fifth book, the latter part of the eighth, the former of the tenth and eleventh books, and in the narration of Michael in the twelfth. I wonder indeed that he who ventured (contrary to the practice of all other epic poets) to imitate *Homer's* lownesses in the *narrative* should not also have copied his plainness and perspicuity in the *dramatic* parts, since in his speeches (where clearness above all is necessary) there is frequently such transposition and forced construction, that the very sense is not to be discovered without a second or third reading; and in this certainly he ought to be no example.—POPE: *Postscript to the Odyssey.*

Addison, *sunk under him.* But the truth is that, both in prose and verse, he had formed his style by a perverse and pedantic principle. He was desirous to use English words with a foreign idiom. This in all his prose is discovered and condemned;[127] for there judgment operates freely, neither softened by the beauty nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but such is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without resistance, the reader feels himself in captivity to a higher and nobler mind, and criticism sinks in admiration.

Milton's style was not modified by his subject; what is shown with greater extent in 'Paradise Lost' may be found in 'Comus.' One source of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuscan poets; the disposition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian, perhaps sometimes combined with other tongues.[128] Of him, at last may be said what Jonson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no language*,[129] but has formed what Butler calls a *Babylonish dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous, but made, by exalted genius and extensive learning, the vehicle

[127] The admirers of Milton's political opinions, and some too who comprehend his poetry, have found his prose style,

> Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute.

This, however, is not the case. The structure of his sentences is generally cumbersome. When no longer confined to numbers, he is as awkward and unwieldy as a swan out of water. What Donne is in poetic pauses Milton is in the euphony of prose. He is behind the best of his contemporaries—behind Taylor, and not to be compared for a moment with either Hobbes or Cowley. In his reply to the Eikon, whatever advantage he may have in argument is not assisted by his style, for Gauden has at least the better of him in the easy gracefulness of a good style.

[128] The language and versification of the 'Paradise Lost' are peculiar in being so much more necessarily correspondent to each than those in any other poem or poet. The connexion of the sentences and the position of the words are exquisitely artificial; but the position is rather according to the logic of passion or universal logic than to the logic of grammar. Milton attempted to make the English language obey the logic of passion as perfectly as the Greek and Latin: hence the occasional harshness in the construction.—COLERIDGE: Lecture X.

[129] Spenser in affecting the ancients writ no language; yet I would have him read for his matter, but as Virgil read Ennius.—BEN JONSON: (*Works by Gifford*, ix. 215.)

of so much instruction and so much pleasure that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praise of copiousness and variety: he was master of his language in its full extent; and has selected the melodious words with such diligence, that from his book alone the Art of English Poetry might be learned.[130]

After his diction, something must be said of his *versification*. The *measure*, he says, *is the English heroic verse without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many examples among the Italians, and some in his own country. The Earl of Surrey is said to have translated one of Virgil's books without rhyme;[131] and, besides our tragedies, a few short poems had appeared in blank verse, particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himself.[132] These petty performances cannot be supposed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Trissino's 'Italia Liberata;' and, finding blank verse easier than rhyme, was desirous of persuading himself that it is better.

Rhyme, he says, and says truly, *is no necessary adjunct of true poetry*.[133] But, perhaps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre or music is no necessary adjunct: it is, however, by the music of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all lan-

[130] The practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by Milton, who, of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear.—COWPER *to Lady Hesketh*, March 6, 1786.

[131] He translated two—the second and the fourth—without rhyme. They are printed among Lord Surrey's Poems.

[132] 'De Guiana Carmen Epicum. Authore G. C.,' printed in Hakluyt, vol. 3. Oldys attributes it to George Chapman. Sufficient attention has not been paid to this early and thoughtful specimen of blank verse.

[133] Neither will I justify Milton for his blank verse, though I may excuse him by the example of Hannibal Caro and other Italians, who have used it; for whatever causes he alleges for the abolishing of rhyme (which I have not now the leisure to examine), his own particular reason is plainly this,—that rhyme was not his talent; he had neither the ease of doing it, nor the graces of it, which is manifest in his Juvenilia, or verses written in his youth, where the rhyme is always constrained and forced, and comes hardly from him, at an age when the soul is most pliant, and the passion of love makes almost every man a rhymer, though not a poet.—DRYDEN: *Ded. of Juvenal*, 1693.

guages; and, in languages melodiously constructed with a due proportion of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another: where metre is scanty and imperfect, some help is necessary. The music of the English heroic line strikes the ear so faintly, that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together; this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmingled with another as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauses, so much boasted by the lovers of blank verse, changes the measures of an English poet to the periods of a declaimer;[134] and there are only a few happy readers of Milton who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verse*, said an ingenious critic,[135] *seems to be verse only to the eye.*

Poetry may subsist without rhyme, but English poetry will not often please; nor can rhyme ever be safely spared but where the subject is able to support itself. Blank verse makes some approach to that which is called the *lapidary style*; has neither the easiness of prose, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reason could urge in its defence has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer;[136] for I cannot

[134] Was there ever anything so delightful as the music of the 'Paradise Lost?' It is like that of a fine organ; has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end, and never equalled unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation. Oh! I could thresh his old jacket till I made his pension jingle in his pocket.—*Cowper to Unwin*, Oct. 31, 1779.

[135] Mr. Lock, of Norbury Park, in Surrey.—*Boswell by Croker*, ed. 1848, p. 668.

[136] I am aware that Johnson has said after some hesitation, that he could not "prevail on himself to wish that Milton had been a rhymer." The opinions of that truly great man, whom it is also the present fashion to decry, will ever

wish his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himself capable of astonishing may write blank verse; but those that hope only to please must condescend to rhyme.

The highest praise of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem, and therefore owes reverence to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations must be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interposition of dialogue, and all the stratagems that surprise and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the least indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himself, confident of his own abilities, and disdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuse admission to the thoughts or images of his predecessors, but he did not seek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted nor received support; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praise, nor solicitation of support. His great works were performed under discountenance, and in blindness, but difficulties vanished at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous; and his work is not the greatest of heroic poems, only because it is not the first.

be received by me with that deference which time will restore to him from all; but with all humility I am not persuaded that the 'Paradise Lost' would not have been more nobly conveyed to posterity, not perhaps in heroic couplets, although even *they* could sustain the subject if well balanced, but in the stanza of Spenser or of Tasso, or in the terza rima of Dante, which the powers of Milton could easily have grafted on our language.—Byron: *Letter to D'Israeli.*

THE NUNCUPATIVE WILL OF JOHN MILTON.[137]

(From the original in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.)

Memorandum, that John Milton, late of the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, in the countie of Middlesex, gentleman, deceased, at severall times before his death, and in particular on or about the twentieth day of July, in the year of our Lord God 1674, being of perfect mind and memorie, declared his Will and intent as to the disposall of his estate after his death, in these words following, or like effect:—

"The portion due to me from Mr. Powell, my former wife's father, I leave to the unkind children I had by her, having received no parte of it: but my meaning is, they shall have no other benefit of my estate than the said portion, and what I have besides done for them; they having been very undutiful to me. All the residue of my estate I leave to [the] disposall of Elizabeth, my loving wife." Which words, or to the same effect, were spoken in the presence of Christopher Milton.

× (Mark of) Elizabeth Fisher.

Nov. 23, 1674.

This will was contested by Anne, Mary, and Deborah Milton, the only children of the poet, being his daughters by his first wife, Mary Powell. The cause was tried before Sir Leoline Jenkins, Judge of the Prerogative Court and Secretary of State, and the depositions were taken in part before Dr. (afterwards Sir William) Trumbull, the friend of Pope. The witnesses on the part of the widow were Christopher Milton, the poet's only brother, and Mary and Elizabeth Fisher, his servant maids.

The brother deposed that "he is a practicer in the law and a bencher in the Inner Temple, but living in vacations at Ipswich; that he did usually at the end of the Term visit John Milton, his brother, before going home, and so at the end of Midsummer Term last past he went to visit his said brother, and then found him within his chamber, in his own house, situate on Bunhill, within the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, and that he did then, not being well and in a serious manner, declare his will in the aforesaid very words, as near as the deponent can now call to mind, being at the time of perfect mind and memory." To the *second* interrogation of the judge, he replied, "that he does not remember the exact day of the month or week, but well remembereth it was in a forenoon, and on the very day on which he, the deponent, was going into the country in the Ipswich coach, which goeth not out of town until noon or thereabouts." To the *third*, that the said deceased was then ill of the gout, and what he then spake

[137] Discovered by Thomas Warton, and first printed in 1791—seven years after Johnson's death.

touching his will was in a very calm manner, only he complained, but without passion, that his children had been unkind to him, but that his wife had been very kind and careful of him. To the *fourth*, that he knoweth not how the parties ministering these interrogatories frequent the church, or what manner of life or conversation they are of, they living apart from their father four or five years last past; and as touching deceased's displeasure with them, he only heard him say at the time of declaring his will that they were undutiful and unkind to him, not expressing any particulars, but in former times he hath heard him complain that they were careless of him being blind, and made nothing of deserting him. To the *sixth*, that what is left to the parties ministering these interrogatories by the deceased's will is in the hands of persons of ability, able to pay the same, being their grandmother and uncle, and he hath seen the grandfather's will, wherein 'tis particularly directed to be paid unto them by his executors. To the *seventh*, that the respondent did draw up the very will executed in this cause, and write it with his own hand when he came to this Court about the 23rd November last, and at that time did read it over to Elizabeth Fisher; that respondent also waited once on deceased's widow at Dr. Exton's chambers about this suit, at which time she wanted some half-crowns, and that he lent her then two half-crowns; and to the *eighth* interrogation he replies that Anne Milton is lame and helpless.

Mary Fisher deposed that she knew and was well acquainted with John Milton for about a twelvemonth before his death, who died about a month since, to the best of deponent's remembrance; that about two months since, as near as she can remember, this deponent being then in the kitchen of the house of the foresaid John Milton, situate against the Artillery Yard, near Bunhill Fields, and about noon of the same day, the deceased and Elizabeth his wife being then at dinner in the kitchen, he, the deceased, amongst other discourse to his wife did utter these words, viz. "Make much of me as long as I live, for thou knowest I have given thee all when I die at thy disposal;" there being then present in the kitchen deponent's sister and *contest* [fellow-witness] Elizabeth Fisher, and the said deceased was at that time of perfect mind and memory, and talked and discoursed sensibly and well, and was very merry, and seemed to be in good health of body.

Elizabeth Fisher, by whom the will is signed, deposed that she was servant unto Mr. John Milton for about a year before his death, who died upon a Sunday the 15th of November last, at night. That she remembers in the month of July last the said deceased being in his lodging-chamber at dinner with his wife, and the said Elizabeth Milton having provided something for the deceased's dinner which he very well liked, he spoke to his said wife these or the like words, viz. "God have mercy, Betty; I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise in providing me such dishes as I think fit, whilst I live; and when I die, thou knowest that I have left thee all." To the *second* and *third* interrogations of the judge, the witness replied that these words were spoken in a Sunday on the afternoon, upon

the deceased's wife providing such victuals for his dinner as he liked, and that he was then indifferent well in health, saving that sometime he was troubled with the pain of the gout, and that he was at that time very merry, and not in any passion or angry humour, neither at that time spoke anything against any of his children that this respondent heard. To the *fourth*, that she had heard the deceased declare his displeasure against his children, and particularly he had told her that a little before he was married to Elizabeth Minshull, a former servant of his told Mary his daughter that she heard the deceased was to be married, to which the said Mary replied that that was no news to hear of his wedding, but if she could hear of his death that was something; and the deceased further told this respondent that his children did combine together and counsel his maid servant to cheat him in her marketings, and that his children had made away some of his books, and would have sold the rest of his books to the dunghill women; and in reply to the *eighth*, the witness deposes that Anne Milton is lame, but hath a trade and can live by the same, which is the making of gold and silver lace, and which the deceased bred her up to.

Judgment was given against the will on the grounds that there had been no solemn bidding of the persons present to take notice that the words he was going to deliver were to be his will, and that the three witnesses (required to support a nuncupative will) did not declare to the identical words uttered at one and at the same time; and letters of administration to the widow were accordingly granted on the 25th of February, 1674-5. All that the daughters gained by the administration appears to have been 100*l.* each, vested in their behalf in rent-charges or annuities, with the approbation of their maternal and paternal uncles, Richard Powell and Christopher Milton.[138]

[138] Todd's 'Life of Milton,' ed. 1852, p. 183.

SAMUEL BUTLER.

BUTLER.

1612–1680.

Born at Strensham in Worcestershire — Educated either at Oxford or Cambridge — Enters the service of the Countess of Kent — Employed by Selden, and acquires the friendship of Cooper the painter — Made Steward of Ludlow Castle — Marries — Sir Samuel Luke — Publishes 'Hudibras' in three parts — His poverty — Death and burial in St. Paul's, Covent Garden — Monument in Westminster Abbey — Works and Character.

Of the great author of 'Hudibras' there is a 'Life' prefixed to the latter editions of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of disputable authority; and some account is incidentally given by Wood, who confesses the uncertainty of his own narrative; more, however, than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

Samuel Butler was born in the parish of Strensham, in Worcestershire, according to his biographer, in 1612. This account Dr. Nash finds confirmed by the register. He was christened February 14.

His father's condition is variously represented. Wood mentions him as competently wealthy; but Mr. Longueville, the son of Butler's principal friend,[1] says he was an honest farmer with some small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar school of Worcester, under Mr. Henry Bright, from whose care he removed for a short time to Cambridge; but for want of money was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford; but at last makes him pass six or seven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college: yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived so long in either university

[1] It is not clear that Longueville said anything of the kind. Johnson is writing from Grey's 'Life,' 1744, and from Broughton's 'Life,' in the 'Bio. Britannica,' fol. 1748, vol. ii. p. 1077. Both Grey and Broughton had communicated with young Mr. Longueville on the subject of Butler.

but as belonging to one house or another; and it is still less likely that he could have so long inhabited a place of learning with so little distinction as to leave his residence uncertain. Dr. Nash has discovered that his father was owner of a house and a little land, worth about eight pounds a-year, still called *Butler's tenement.*

Wood has his information from his brother, whose narrative placed him at Cambridge, in opposition to that of his neighbours, which sent him to Oxford. The brother's seems the best authority, till, by confessing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reason to suspect that he was resolved to bestow on him an academical education; but durst not name a college, for fear of a detection.

He was for some time, according to the author of his Life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys, of Earl's Croomb in Worcestershire, an eminent justice of the peace. In his service he had not only leisure for study, but for recreation: his amusements were music and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper. Some pictures, said to be his, were shown to Dr. Nash, at Earl's Croomb; but, when he inquired for them some years afterwards, he found them destroyed, to stop windows, and owns that they hardly deserved a better fate.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the Countess of Kent,[2] where he had the use of a library; and so much recommended himself to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary business. Selden, as is well known, was steward to the Countess, and is supposed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her estate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that lady's service, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The vicissitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke,[3] one of Cromwell's officers. Here

[2] Elizabeth Grey, Countess of Kent, daughter of Gilbert Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury. She lived at Wrest in Bedfordshire, died in 1651, and was buried at Flitton.

[3] Of Woodend, near Cople, in Bedfordshire, and scoutmaster for Bedfordshire during Cromwell's government. He died in 1670, and was buried at Cople.

he observed so much of the character of the sectaries, that he is said to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that such a design would be formed in a place where he saw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and undisguised in the confidence of success.

At length the King returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made secretary to the Earl of Carbury, president of the principality of Wales, who conferred on him the stewardship of Ludlow Castle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.[4]

In this part of his life he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family, and lived, says Wood, upon her fortune, having studied the common law, but never practised it. A fortune she had, says his biographer,[5] but it was lost by bad securities.

In 1663 was published the first part, containing three cantos, of the poem of 'Hudibras,' which, as Prior relates, was made known at Court by the taste and influence of the Earl of Dorset. When it was known, it was necessarily admired: the King quoted, the courtiers studied, and the whole party of the royalists applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden shower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.[6]

[4] He does not seem to have held the situation of Steward after 1662, when he was succeeded by Edward Lloyd. See 'Notes and Queries,' vol. v. p. 5.

[5] Dr. Grey.

[6] 1662, Dec. 26th.— . . . falling into discourse of a new book of drollery in use, called Hudibras, I would needs go find it out, and met with it at the Temple: cost me 2*s.* 6*d.* But when I come to read it, it is so silly an abuse of the Presbyter Knight going to the wars that I am ashamed of it; and by and by, meeting at Mr. Townsend's at dinner, I sold it to him for 18*d.*

1663, Feb. 6.— . . . to a bookseller's in the Strand, and there bought Hudibras again, it being certainly some ill humour to be so against that which all the world cries up to be the example of wit; for which I am resolved once more to read him, and see whether I can find it or no.

1663, Nov. 28.—To Paul's Church Yard, and there looked upon the second part of Hudibras, which I buy not, but borrow to read, to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cried so mightily up, though it hath not a good liking in me, though I had tried but twice or three times reading to bring myself to think it witty.

1663, Dec. 10.—To St. Paul's Church Yard, to my booksellers . . . chose . . . . Hudibras, both parts, the book now in greatest fashion for drollery, though I cannot, I confess, see enough where the wit lies.—PEPYS.

In 1664 the second part appeared;[7] the curiosity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praised and elated. But praise was his whole reward. Clarendon, says Wood, gave him reason to hope for "places and employments of value and credit;" but no such advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported that the King once gave him three hundred guineas;[8] but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.[9]

Wood relates[10] that he was secretary to Villiers Duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer,[11] who yet allows the Duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both these accounts are false there is reason to suspect, from a story told by Packe, in his account of the 'Life of Wycherley;' and from some verses which Mr. Thyer has published in the author's 'Remains.'

[7] As the three parts of Hudibras in the first editions are far from common, I transcribe their title-pages:—

Hudibras. The First Part. Written in the time of the late Wars. London: printed by J. G. for Richard Marriot, under Saint Dunstan's Church, in Fleet-street, 1663, pp. 268. The imprimatur of Sir John Berkenhead is dated 11th Nov., 1662.

Hudibras. The Second Part. By the authour of the first. London: printed by T. R. for John Martyn and James Allestry, at the Bell in St. Paul's Churchyard, 1664, pp. 216, 8vo. The imprimatur of Roger L'Estrange is dated 5th November, 1663.

Hudibras. The Third and Last Part. Written by the author of the First and Second Parts. London: printed for Simon Miller, at the sign of the Star, at the West End of St. Paul's, 1678, pp. 285. On reverse of title, 'Licensed and Entred according to the Act of Parliament for Printing.'

The second and third parts are uniform in size. The first is smaller than the second.

[8] Life of Butler in Birch's 'General Dictionary.'

[9] The original of the following warrant is in the British Museum.—*Birch, MSS.* 4293:—

Charles R.

Our Will and Pleasure is, and Wee do hereby strictly charge and command, that no Printer, Bookseller, Stationer, or other person whatsoever, within our Kingdomes of England or Ireland, do print, reprint, utter, or sell, or cause to be printed, reprinted, uttered, or sold, a Book or Poem call'd Hudibras, or any part therof (without the consent and approbation of Samuel Boteler, Esq., or his Assignes), as they and every of them will answer the contrary at their perills. Given at our Court at Whitehall the tenth day of September, in the year of our L^d^ God 1677, and in the 29th year of our Reign.

By his Ma^ts^ Command,

Jo. Berkenhead.

[10] On the authority of Aubrey.

[11] Grey in his 'Life of Butler,' 1744.

"Mr. Wycherley," says Packe, "had always laid hold of any opportunity which offered of representing to the Duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family by writing his inimitable 'Hudibras;' and that it was a reproach to the Court, that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the wants he did. The Duke seemed always to hearken to him with attention enough; and after some time undertook to recommend his pretensions to his Majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his Grace to name a day when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly: the Duke joined them; but, as the d——l would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open, and his Grace, who had seated himself near it, observing a pimp of his acquaintance (the creature too was a knight) trip by with a brace of ladies, immediately quitted his engagement, to follow another kind of business, at which he was more ready than in doing good offices to men of desert; though no one was better qualified than he was, both in regard to his fortune and understanding, to protect them, and, from that time to the day of his death, poor Butler never found the least effect of his promise!" [12]

Such is the story. The verses are written with a degree of acrimony such as neglect and disappointment might naturally excite; and such as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expressing against a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithstanding this discouragement and neglect he still prosecuted his design; and in 1678 published the third part, which still leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended, or with what events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought strange that he should stop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is sufficiently unpleasing. He had

[12] Packe's 'Miscellanies in Verse and Prose,' 8vo. 1719, p. 183.

now arrived at an age when he might think it proper to be in jest no longer, and perhaps his health might now begin to fail.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville,[13] having unsuccessfully solicited a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey,[14] buried him at his own cost in the churchyard of Covent Garden.[15] Dr. Simon Patrick read the service.[16]

Granger was informed by Dr. Pearce, who named for his authority Mr. Lowndes of the Treasury, that Butler had a yearly pension of an hundred pounds.[17] This is contradicted by all tradition, by the complaints of Oldham,[18] and by the reproaches of Dryden,[19] and, I am afraid, will never be confirmed.

[13] Of whom Roger North has given so pleasing an account in his 'Life of the Lord Keeper Guildford.'

[14] This is stated on the authority of the writer of the 'Life of Butler,' in Birch's 'General Dictionary.' The 'Life of Butler' in Birch is under the article 'Hudibras.' This blunder was not uncommon. Dryden calls him "our excellent Hudibras, whom I ought to have mentioned when I spoke of Donne." The same confusion of name is made by Dryden in his 'Hind and Panther,'—"Unpitied Hudibras."

[15] Broughton, in a note in the 'Biographia Britannica,' fol. 1748, vol. ii. p. 1075, states, on the authority of the younger Longueville, that Butler "lived for some years in Rose Street, Covent Garden, and probably died there."

[16] Grey's 'Life,' 1744, p. viii. Patrick (afterwards Bishop of Ely) was then rector of St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

[17] Granger's 'Biographical History of England,' iv. 40, ed. 1775, 8vo.

[18] On Butler who can think without just rage,
The glory and the scandal of his age?
Fair stood his hopes when first he came to town,
Met everywhere with welcomes of renown,
Courted, caress'd by all, with wonder read,
And promises of princely favour fed:
But what reward for all he had at last,
After a life in dull expectance pass'd!
The wretch, at summing up his misspent days,
Found nothing left but poverty and praise!
Of all his gains by verse, he could not save
Enough to purchase flannel and a grave:
Reduc'd to want, he in due time fell sick,
Was fain to die, and be interred on tick:
And well might bless the fever that was sent
To rid him hence, and his worse fate prevent.

OLDHAM: *A Satire dissuading from Poetry.*

[19] It is enough for our age to have neglected Mr. Cowley, and starved Mr. Butler.—DRYDEN: *Letter to Hyde, Lord Rochester.*

Unpitied

About sixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, mayor of London, and a friend to Butler's principles, bestowed on him a monument in Westminster Abbey, thus inscribed:

M. S.
Samuelis Butleri,
Qui *Strenshamiæ* in agro *Vigorn.* nat. 1612,
obiit *Lond.* 1680.
Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer;
Operibus Ingenii, non item præmiis, fœlix:
Satyrici apud nos Carminis Artifex egregius;
Quo simulatæ Religionis Larvam detraxit,
Et Perduellium scelera liberrime exagitavit;
Scriptorum in suo genere, Primus & Postremus.
Ne, cui vivo deerant ferè omnia,
Deesset etiam mortuo Tumulus,
Hoc tandem posito marmore, curavit
Johannes Barber, Civis *Londinensis*, 1721.

After his death were published three small volumes of his posthumous works,[20] I know not by whom collected, or by what authority ascertained; and, lately [1759], two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, indubitably genuine. From none of these pieces can his life be traced, or

> Unpitied Hudibras, your champion friend
> Has shown how far your charities extend.
> This lasting verse shall on his tomb be read,
> He sham'd you living, and upbraids you dead.
>
> Dryden: *Hind and Panther*, Part 3.

Butler was starved at the same time that the King [Charles II.] had his book in his pocket.—Dennis: *Reflections on Pope's Essay on Criticism*, p. 23.

Butler was suffered to die in a garret, Otway in an alehouse, Nat Lee in the streets. And yet Butler was a whole species of poets in one; admirable in a manner in which no one else has been tolerable; a manner which began and ended in him, in which he knew no guide and has found no followers.—Dennis: *Remarks on Pope's Homer*, 8vo. 1717, p. 6.

Did not the celebrated author of 'Hudibras' bring the King's enemies into lower contempt with the sharpness of his wit than all the terrors of his administration could reduce them to? Was not his book always in the pocket of his prince? And what did the mighty prowess of this knight-errant amount to? Why, he died, with the highest esteem of the court, in a garret.—Colley Cibber: *Dedication of Ximenes* (1719) *to Sir Richard Steele.*

[20] Three vols. 12mo. 1720. Except the 'Ode on Duval the Highwayman,' and two prose tracts, they are all spurious.

his character discovered. Some verses, in the last collection, show him to have been among those who ridiculed the institution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were for some time very numerous and very acrimonious, for what reason it is hard to conceive, since the philosophers professed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the most zealous enemy of innovation must admit the gradual progress of experience, however he may oppose hypothetical temerity.

In this mist of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.[21]

The poem of 'Hudibras' is one of those compositions of which a nation may justly boast, as the images which it exhibits are domestic, the sentiments unborrowed and unexpected, and the strain of diction original and peculiar. We must not, however,

[21] Mr. Longueville was the last patron and friend that poor old Butler the author of 'Hudibras' had, and in his old age he supported him; otherwise he might have been literally starved.—NORTH'S *Life of the Lord Keeper Guildford.*

> Prevent the malice of their stars in time,
> And warn them early from the sin of rhyme;
> Tell 'em how Spenser starv'd, how Cowley mourn'd,
> How Butler's faith and service was return'd.
>
> OTWAY'S *Prologue to Lee's Constantine the Great*, 1684.

He is of a middle stature, strong set, high coloured, a head of sorrel hair, a severe and sound judgment: a good fellow. . . . . He died of a consumption, Septemb. 25 (Anno D^ni^ 1680), and buried 27, according to his own appointment, in the churchyard of Covent Garden; sc. in the north part next the church at the east end. His feet touch the wall. His grave, 2 yards distant from the pilaster of the dore (by his desire), 6 foot deepe. About 25 of his old acquaintance at his funeral: I myself being one.—AUBREY'S *Lives*, ii. 263.

The best portraits of Butler are two by Soest; one in the Bodleian, the other at Drayton Manor, a purchase by the minister Sir Robert Peel. They are identical in treatment, and like in every respect, to the portrait engraved by Vertue from the picture by Soest, then in the possession of Dr. Mead. The great Lord Clarendon placed Butler's portrait in a situation of honour, "in the room where he used to eat and dine in public," as Evelyn informs Pepys, or "in his library, over the chimney," as Aubrey informs Wood. The Clarendon picture is lost. The Jennens portrait, mentioned by Granger, is now at Lord Howe's seat at Gopsal, and is a poor small copy, after Soest.

suffer the pride which we assume as the countrymen of Butler to make any encroachment upon justice, nor appropriate those honours which others have a right to share. The poem of 'Hudibras' is not wholly English; the original idea is to be found in the history of 'Don Quixote'—a book to which a mind of the greatest powers may be indebted without disgrace.

Cervantes shows a man who, having by the incessant perusal of incredible tales subjected his understanding to his imagination, and familiarised his mind by pertinacious meditations to trains of incredible events and scenes of impossible existence, goes out in the pride of knighthood to redress wrongs and defend virgins, to rescue captive princesses, and tumble usurpers from their thrones, attended by a squire, whose cunning, too low for the suspicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his master.

The hero of Butler is a Presbyterian justice, who, in the confidence of legal authority and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repress superstition and correct abuses, accompanied by an Independent clerk, disputatious and obstinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had so much kindness for Don Quixote, that, however he embarrasses him with absurd distresses, he gives him so much sense and virtue as may preserve our esteem; wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made by matchless dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderness; he chooses not that any pity should be shown or respect paid him; he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and describing his person and habiliments, the author seems to labour with a tumultuous confusion of dissimilar ideas. He had read the history of the mock knights-errant; he knew the notions and manners of a Presbyterian magistrate, and tried to unite the absurdities of both, however distant, in one personage. Thus he gives him that pedantic ostentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances

that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He sends him out a *colonelling*, and yet never brings him within sight of war.

If Hudibras be considered as the representative of the Presbyterians, it is not easy to say why his weapons should be represented as ridiculous or useless; for, whatever judgment might be passed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had sufficiently shown that their swords were not to be despised.

The hero, thus compounded of swaggerer and pedant, of knight and justice, is led forth to action, with his squire Ralpho, an Independent enthusiast.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, since it is left imperfect, no judgment can be made. It is probable that the hero was to be led through many luckless adventures, which would give occasion, like his attack upon the *bear and fiddle*, to expose the ridiculous rigour of the sectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whacum, to make superstition and credulity contemptible; or, like his recourse to the low retailer of the law, discover the fraudulent practices of different professions.

What series of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or punished his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work must have had, as it seems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenser; the action could not have been one; there could only have been a succession of incidents, each of which might have happened without the rest, and which could not at all co-operate to any single conclusion.

The discontinuity of the action might, however, have been easily forgiven, if there had been action enough; but I believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of Hudibras, as in the history of Thucydides, there is more said than done. The scenes are too seldom changed, and the attention is tired with long conversation.

It is, indeed, much more easy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every position makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an answer. When two disputants are engaged upon a complicated and extensive question, the

difficulty is not to continue, but to end the controversy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the possibilities of life, or that life itself affords little variety, every man who has tried knows how much labour it will cost to form such a combination of circumstances as shall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reason.

Perhaps the Dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it by quicker reciprocation, by seasonable interruptions, by sudden questions, and by a nearer approach to dramatic sprightliness; without which fictitious speeches will always tire, however sparkling with sentences, and however variegated with allusions.

The great source of pleasure is variety. Uniformity must tire at last, though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and when expectation is disappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the present, whoever would please must make provision. The skilful writer *irritat*, *mulcet*, makes a due distribution of the still and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and those necessary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praised.

If inexhaustible wit could give perpetual pleasure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought so many remote images so happily together? It is scarcely possible to peruse a page without finding some association of images that was never found before. By the first paragraph the reader is amused, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more strained to astonishment; but astonishment is a toilsome pleasure; he is soon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

> "Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando
> Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male."

Imagination is useless without knowledge: nature gives in vain the power of combination, unless study and observation supply materials to be combined. Butler's treasures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expense: whatever topic em-

ploys his mind, he shows himself qualified to expand and illustrate it with all the accessaries that books can furnish; he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the bye-paths of literature; not only to have taken general surveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inspection.

If the French boast the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the most violent parts of his performance are those which retired study and native wit cannot supply. He that merely makes a book from books may be useful, but can scarcely be great. Butler had not suffered life to glide beside him unseen or unobserved. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, interest, and passion. From such remarks proceeded that great number of sententious distichs which have passed into conversation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general stock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the first question of intelligent curiosity is, how was it performed? 'Hudibras' was not a hasty effusion; it was not produced by a sudden tumult of imagination, or a short paroxysm of violent labour. To accumulate such a mass of sentiments at the call of accidental desire, or of sudden necessity, is beyond the reach and power of the most active and comprehensive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer of Manchester, the excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could show something like 'Hudibras' in prose. He has in his possession the commonplace book in which Butler reposited, not such events or precepts as are gathered by reading, but such remarks, similitudes, allusions, assemblages, or inferences, as occasion prompted, or meditation produced, those thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be usefully applied to some future purpose. Such is the labour of those who write for immortality.

But human works are not easily found without a perishable part. Of the ancient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppressive. Of 'Hudibras,' the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible and less striking. What

Cicero says of philosophy is true likewise of wit and humour, that "time effaces the fictions of opinion, and confirms the determinations of Nature." Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man; but those modifications of life and peculiarities of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents.

Much, therefore, of that humour which transported the last century with merriment is lost to us, who do not know the sour solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples of the ancient Puritans; or, if we knew them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot, but by recollection and study, understand the lines in which they are satirised. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life; we judge of the life by contemplating the picture. [22]

It is scarcely possible, in the regularity and composure of the present time, to image the tumult of absurdity and clamour of contradiction which perplexed doctrine, disordered practice, and disturbed both public and private quiet, in that age when subordination was broken, and awe was hissed away; when any

[22] He that writes upon general principles, or delivers universal truths, may hope to be often read, because his work will be equally useful at all times, and in every country; but he cannot expect it to be received with eagerness, or to spread with rapidity, because desire can have no particular stimulation; that which is to be loved long must be loved with reason rather than with passion. He that lays out his labours upon temporary subjects, easily finds readers, and quickly loses them; for what should make the book valued when its subject is no more?

These observations will show the reason why the poem of 'Hudibras' is almost forgotten, however embellished with sentiments and diversified with allusions, however bright with wit, and however solid with truth. The hypocrisy which it detected, and the folly which it ridiculed, have long vanished from public notice. Those who had felt the mischief of discord, and the tyranny of usurpation, read it with rapture; for every line brought back to memory something known, and gratified resentment by the just censure of something hated. But the book which was once quoted by princes, and which supplied conversation to all the assemblies of the gay and the witty, is now seldom mentioned, and even by those who affect to mention it, is seldom read: so vainly is wit lavished upon fugitive topics, so little can architecture secure duration when the ground is false.—JOHNSON: *Idler*, No. 59.

unsettled innovator who could hatch a half-formed notion produced it to the public; when every man might become a preacher, and almost every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wisdom of the nation is very reasonably supposed to reside in the parliament. What can be concluded of the lower classes of the people, when, in one of the parliaments summoned by Cromwell, it was seriously proposed that all the records in the Tower should be burnt, that all memory of things past should be effaced, and that the whole system of life should commence anew?

We have never been witnesses of animosities excited by the use of mince-pies and plum-porridge; nor seen with what abhorrence those who could eat them at all other times of the year would shrink from them in December. An old Puritan, who was alive in my childhood, being, at one of the feasts of the church, invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him that if he would treat him at an alehouse with beer, brewed for all times and seasons, he should accept his kindness, but would have none of his superstitious meats and drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance; and he that reads Gataker upon 'Lots' may see how much learning and reason one of the first scholars of his age thought necessary to prove that it was no crime to throw a die, or play at cards, or to hide a shilling for the reckoning.

Astrology, however, against which so much of the satire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had in that time a very extensive dominion. Its predictions raised hopes and fears in minds which ought to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and when the king was prisoner in Carisbrook Castle, an astrologer was consulted what hour would be found most favourable to an escape.

What effect this poem had upon the public—whether it shamed imposture, or reclaimed credulity, is not easily determined. Cheats can seldom stand long against laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore fast away, though some men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, con-

tinued to believe that conjunctions and oppositions had a great part in the distribution of good or evil, and in the government of sublunary things.

Poetical action ought to be probable upon certain suppositions, and such probability as burlesque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can show more plainly the necessity of doing something, and the difficulty of finding something to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the most agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very suitable indeed to the manners of that age and nation, which ascribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances, but so remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibrastic time, that judgment and imagination are alike offended.

The diction of this poem is grossly familiar, and the numbers purposely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts, by their native excellence, secure themselves from violation, being such as mean language cannot express. The mode of versification has been blamed by Dryden,[23] who regrets that the

[23] The worth of his poem is too well known to need my commendation, and he is above my censure. His satire is of the Varronian kind, though unmixed with prose. The choice of his numbers is suitable enough to his design, as he has managed it; but in any other hand, the shortness of his verse, and the quick returns of rhyme, had debased the dignity of style. And, besides, the double rhyme (a necessary companion of burlesque writing) is not so proper for manly satire; for it turns earnest too much to jest, and gives us a boyish kind of pleasure. It tickles awkwardly, with a kind of pain to the best sort of readers; we are pleased ungratefully, and, if I may say so, against our liking. We thank him not for giving us that unseasonable delight, when we know he could have given us a better, and more solid. He might have left that task to others, who not being able to put in thought, can only make us grin with the excrescence of a word of two or three syllables in the close. It is, indeed, below so great a master to make use of such a little instrument. But his good sense is perpetually shining through all he writes; it affords us not the time of finding faults; we pass through the levity of his rhyme, and are immediately carried into some admirable, useful thought. After all, he has chosen this kind of verse, and has written the best in it; and had he taken another, he would always have excelled.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of Juvenal*, 1693.

It is a dispute among the critics, whether burlesque poetry runs best in heroic verse, like that of the 'Dispensary;' or in doggerel, like that of 'Hudibras.' I think where the low character is to be raised, the heroic is the proper measure; but when an hero is to be pulled down and degraded, it is done best in doggerel. If 'Hudibras' had been set out with as much wit and humour in heroic verse as he is in doggerel, he would have made a much more agreeable figure

heroic measure was not rather chosen. To the critical sentence of Dryden the highest reverence would be due were not his decisions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wished to change the measure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroic, the diction should still remain vulgar, he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural composition. If he preferred a general stateliness both of sound and words, he can be only understood to wish Butler had undertaken a different work.

The measure is quick, sprightly, and colloquial, suitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the sentiments. But such numbers and such diction can gain regard only when they are used by a writer whose vigour of fancy and copiousness of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and justness of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common thoughts in careless versification, it will only be said, "Pauper videri Cinna vult, et est pauper." The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticism may justly doom them to perish together.

Nor even though another Butler should arise, would another 'Hudibras' obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural; and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing; but when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice which, by frequent repetition, detects itself; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks of which the only use is to show that they can be played.

than he does, though the generality of his readers are so wonderfully pleased with the double rhymes, that I do not expect many will be of my opinion in this particular.—Addison: *The Spectator*, No. 249.

EARL OF ROCHESTER.

ROCHESTER.

1647–1680.

Born at Ditchley, in Oxfordshire — Educated at Oxford — Becomes a Favourite with Charles II. — Early and continued Dissipation — His Quarrel with Lord Mulgrave — Burnet's Account of his last Illness — Death and Burial at Spilsbury, in Oxfordshire — His Character as a Poet.

John Wilmot, afterwards Earl of Rochester, the son of Henry, Earl of Rochester, better known by the title of Lord Wilmot, so often mentioned in Clarendon's 'History,' was born April 10, 1647, at Ditchley in Oxfordshire.[1] After a grammatical education at the school of Burford, he entered a nobleman into Wadham College in 1659, only twelve years old; and in 1661, at fourteen, was, with some other persons of high rank, made Master of Arts by Lord Clarendon in person.

He travelled afterwards into France and Italy; and, at his return, devoted himself to the Court. In 1665 he went to sea with Sandwich, and distinguished himself at Bergen by uncommon intrepidity; and the next summer served again on board Sir Edward Spragge, who, in the heat of the engagement, having a message of reproof to send to one of his captains, could find no man ready to carry it but Wilmot, who, in an open boat, went and returned amidst the storm of shot.

But his reputation for bravery was not lasting; he was reproached with slinking away in street quarrels, and leaving his companions to shift as they could without him; and Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, has left a story of his refusal to fight him.[2]

He had very early an inclination to intemperance, which he

[1] His mother was Anne, daughter of Sir John St. John, of Lyddiard, Wiltshire, and widow of Sir Francis Henry Lee, of Ditchley. She survived her celebrated son. His father died in 1657.

[2] He had a quarrel with the Earl of Rochester, which he has perhaps too ostentatiously related, as Rochester's surviving daughter, the Lady Sandwich, is said to have told him with very sharp reproaches. —Johnson: *Life of Sheffield.*

totally subdued in his travels; but, when he became a courtier, he unhappily addicted himself to dissolute and vicious company, by which his principles were corrupted, and his manners depraved. He lost all sense of religious restraint; and, finding it not convenient to admit the authority of laws which he was resolved not to obey, sheltered his wickedness behind infidelity.

As he excelled in that noisy and licentious merriment which wine incites, his companions eagerly encouraged him in excess, and he willingly indulged it; till, as he confessed to Dr. Burnet, he was for five years together continually drunk, or so much inflamed by frequent ebriety as in no interval to be master of himself.

In this state he played many frolics, which it is not for his honour that we should remember, and which are not now distinctly known. He often pursued low amours in mean disguises, and always acted with great exactness and dexterity the characters which he assumed.

He once erected a stage on Tower-hill, and harangued the populace as a mountebank; and, having made physic part of his study, is said to have practised it successfully.

He was so much in favour with King Charles that he was made one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, and ranger of Woodstock Park.

Having an active and inquisitive mind, he never, except in his paroxysms of intemperance, was wholly negligent of study: he read what is considered as polite learning so much, that he is mentioned by Wood as the greatest scholar of all the nobility. Sometimes he retired into the country, and amused himself with writing libels, in which he did not pretend to confine himself to truth.[3]

His favourite author in French was Boileau, and in English Cowley.[4]

[3] In the country Lord Rochester lived a blameless life; but he used to say (as Aubrey tells us) that "when he came to Brentford the devil entered into him, and never left him till he returned to the country again, to Adderbury or Woodstock Park."—MALONE: *Dryden*, ii. 145, *Additions, &c.*

This is not in Aubrey's 'Lives,' as printed, but Malone had access to Aubrey's MSS., and meditated a publication from them.

[4] That Cowley was his favourite author in English is stated by Burnet, but

Thus in a course of drunken gaiety and gross sensuality, with intervals of study perhaps yet more criminal, with an avowed contempt of all decency and order, a total disregard to every moral, and a resolute denial of every religious obligation, he lived worthless and useless, and blazed out his youth and his health in lavish voluptuousness; till, at the age of one-and-thirty, he had exhausted the fund of life, and reduced himself to a state of weakness and decay.

At this time he was led to an acquaintance with Dr. Burnet, to whom he laid open with great freedom the tenor of his opinions, and the course of his life, and from whom he received such conviction of the reasonableness of moral duty, and the truth of Christianity, as produced a total change both of his manners and opinions. The account of those salutary consequences is given by Burnet in a book entitled 'Some Passages of the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester,'[5] which the critic ought to read for its elegance, the philosopher for its arguments, and the saint for its piety. It were an injury to the reader to offer him an abridgment.[6]

He died July 26, 1680, before he had completed his thirty-fourth year; and was so worn away by a long illness that life went out without a struggle.[7]

Burnet is contradicted by Dryden—a better authority on such a point. Lord Rochester said of Cowley, though somewhat profanely, "Not being of God, he could not stand."—*Preface to Fables*, 1700.

[5] 8vo. 1680. "Nor was the King displeased with my being sent for by Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, when he died: he fancied that he had told me many things of which I might make an ill use; yet he had read the book that I writ concerning him, and spoke well of it."—BURNET: *Own Times*, ii. 288, ed. 1823.

[6] I asked if Burnet had not given a good life of Rochester? *Johnson:* We have a good *Death;* there is not much *Life.*—*Boswell by Croker*, p. 559.

[7] He was buried in the north aisle of Spilsbury Church, in Oxfordshire, but without a monument or inscribed stone to distinguish his grave. He ran away with, 26th May, 1665, and married 1666-7, Mrs. Elizabeth Mallet, of Enmere, in Somersetshire, a great heiress, by whom he left a son and three daughters. The son Charles, third and last Earl of Rochester, survived his father scarcely two years, and was buried 7th Dec., 1681, by his father's side. Elizabeth, the second daughter, married the third Earl of Sandwich, and died at Paris, 2nd July, 1757, seventy-seven years after her father. She had much of her father's wit. See Prior's verses on Wilmot's daughter in 'Drift,' i. 110. "He was a graceful and well shaped person," says Burnet, "tall and well made, if not a little too slender." The

Lord Rochester was eminent for the vigour of his colloquial wit, and remarkable for many wild pranks and sallies of extravagance. The glare of his general character diffused itself upon his writings; the compositions of a man whose name was heard so often were certain of attention, and from many readers certain of applause. This blaze of reputation is not yet quite extinguished; and his poetry still retains some splendour beyond that which genius has bestowed.

Wood and Burnet give us reason to believe that much was imputed to him which he did not write. I know not by whom the original collection was made, or by what authority its genuineness was ascertained. The first edition was published in the year of his death, with an air of concealment, professing in the title-page to be printed at 'Antwerp.' [8]

Of some of the pieces, however, there is no doubt. The 'Imitation of Horace's Satire,' the 'Verses to Lord Mulgrave,' the 'Satire against Man,' the 'Verses upon Nothing,' and perhaps some others, are, I believe, genuine, and perhaps most of those which this collection exhibits.[9]

As he cannot be supposed to have found leisure for any

The best portrait of Lord Rochester is the Sir Peter Lely, at Hinchinbrooke, the seat of the Earl of Sandwich. There is a large engraving of him by R. White (1681), considered the best print of him, and a smaller one by the same engraver prefixed to the first edition of Burnet's 'Some Passages,' &c., 1680. In his portrait at Warwick Castle he is represented crowning his monkey with laurel.

[8] Whereas there is a Libel of lewd scandalous Poems lately printed, under the name of the Earl of Rochester, whoever shall discover the Printer to Mr. Thom L. Cary, at the sign of the Blew Bore, in Cheap-side, London, or to Mr. Will Richards, at his house in Bow-street, Covent Garden, shall have 5*l.* reward.—*London Gazette*, No. 1567, Nov. 22-25, 1680.

[9] The prefaces to Tonson's editions of 1691 and 1696 were written by Rymer, as I gather from a MS. note in Pope's copy of the edition of 1696. The heading to the poem M. G. to O. B., Pope has made 'M. C. to D. B.,' *i. e.* Martin Clifford to the Duke of Buckingham.

"Talking of Rochester's poems, he [Johnson] said he had given them to Steevens to castrate for the edition of the Poets to which he was to write prefaces." —*Boswell by Croker*, p. 559.

There is no good edition of Rochester's Poems: that professedly printed at Antwerp in the year in which he died is scarce and dear, but contains much that he never wrote; the still more obscene edition, 2 vols., 1731-2, fetches a still larger price, but is not to be relied on. The castrated editions are common enough, but too incomplete.

course of continued study, his pieces are commonly short, such as one fit of resolution would produce.

His songs have no particular character; they tell, like other songs, in smooth and easy language, of scorn and kindness, dismission and desertion, absence and inconstancy, with the commonplaces of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy; but have little nature, and little sentiment.

His imitation of Horace on Lucilius is not inelegant or unhappy. In the reign of Charles the Second began that adaptation, which has since been very frequent, of ancient poetry to present times; and perhaps few will be found where the parallelism is better preserved than in this. The versification is indeed sometimes careless, but it is sometimes vigorous and weighty.[10]

The strongest effort of his muse is his poem upon 'Nothing.'[11] He is not the first who has chosen this barren topic for the boast of his fertility. There is a poem called 'Nihil' in Latin by Passerat, a poet and critic of the sixteenth century in France, who, in his own epitaph, expresses his zeal for good poetry thus:

"—— Molliter ossa quiescent
Sint modo carminibus non onerata malis."

His works are not common, and therefore I shall subjoin his verses.

In examining this performance, 'Nothing' must be considered as having not only a negative but a kind of positive signification; as I need not fear thieves, I have *nothing*, and *nothing* is a very powerful protector. In the first part of the sentence it is taken negatively; in the second it is taken positively, as an agent.

[10] I remember I heard him [Andrew Marvell] say that the Earl of Rochester was the only man in England that had the true vein of satire.—AUBREY: *Lives*, iii. 438.

Oldham is a very indelicate writer: he has strong rage, but it is too much like Billingsgate. Lord Rochester had much more delicacy, and more knowledge of mankind.—POPE: *Spence by Singer*, p. 19.

[11] French *truth* and British *policy* make a conspicuous figure in Nothing, as the Earl of Rochester has very well observed in his admirable poem on that barren subject.—ADDISON: *Spectator*, No. 305.

In one of Boileau's lines it was a question, whether he should use *à rien faire*, or *à ne rien faire;* and the first was preferred because it gave *rien* a sense in some sort positive. 'Nothing' can be a subject only in its positive sense, and such a sense is given it in the first line:

> "*Nothing*, thou elder brother ev'n to Shade."

In this line, I know not whether he does not allude to a curious book 'De Umbra,' by Wowerus, which, having told the qualities of Shade, concludes with a poem, in which are these lines:

> "Jam primum terram validis circumspice claustris
> Suspensam totam, decus admirabile mundi
> Terrasque tractusque maris, camposque liquentes
> Aeris et vasti laqueata palatia cœli——
> Omnibus UMBRA prior."

The positive sense is generally preserved, with great skill, through the whole poem; though sometimes in a subordinate sense, the negative *nothing* is injudiciously mingled. Passerat confounds the two senses.

Another of his most vigorous pieces is his lampoon on Sir Car Scroop, who, in a poem called 'The Praise of Satire,' had some lines like these:[12]

> "He who can push into a midnight fray
> His brave companion, and then run away,
> Leaving him to be murder'd in the street,
> Then put it off with some buffoon conceit:
> Him, thus dishonour'd, for a wit you own,
> And court him as top fiddler of the town."

This was meant of Rochester, whose *buffoon conceit* was, I suppose, a saying often mentioned, that *every man would be a coward if he durst;* and drew from him those furious verses, to which Scroop made in reply an epigram, ending with these lines:

> "Thou canst hurt no man's fame with thy ill word;
> Thy pen is full as harmless as thy sword."

---

[12] I quote from memory.—JOHNSON. The lines quoted are printed (though somewhat differently) in Villiers Duke of Buckingham's 'Works,' ii. 155, ed. 1775.

Of the satire against Man, Rochester can only claim what remains when all Boileau's part is taken away.

In all his works there is sprightliness and vigour, and everywhere may be found tokens of a mind which study might have carried to excellence. What more can be expected from a life spent in ostentatious contempt of regularity, and ended before the abilities of many other men began to be displayed?[13]

Poema CI. V. Joannis Passeratii,
Regii in Academia Parisiensi Professoris,
Ad ornatissimum virum Erricum Memmium.

Janus adest, festæ poscunt sua dona Kalendæ,
Munus abest festis quod possim offerre Kalendis.
Siccine Castalius nobis exaruit humor?
Usque adeò ingenii nostri est exhausta facultas,
Immunem ut videat redeuntis janitor anni?
Quod nusquam est, potius nova per vestigia quæram.
Ecce autem partes dum sese versat in omnes
Invenit mea Musa NIHIL, ne despice munus.
Nam NIHIL est gemmis, NIHIL est pretiosius auro.
Huc animum, huc igitur vultus adverte benignos;
Res nova narratur quæ nulli audita priorum,
Ausonii et Graii dixerunt cætera vates,
Ausoniæ indictum NIHIL est Græcæque Camœnæ.
E cœlo quacunque Ceres sua prospicit arva,
Aut genitor liquidis orbem complectitur ulnis
Oceanus, NIHIL interitus et originis expers.
Immortale NIHIL, NIHIL omni parte beatum.
Quòd si hinc majestas et vis divina probatur,
Num quid honore deûm, num quid dignabimur aris?
Conspectu lucis NIHIL est jucundius almæ,
Vere NIHIL, NIHIL irriguo formosius horto,
Floridius pratis, Zephyri clementius aura;
In bello sanctum NIHIL est, Martisque tumultu:
Justum in pace NIHIL, NIHIL est in fœdere tutum.
Felix cui NIHIL est, (fuerant hæc vota Tibullo)

[13] Dryden dedicated to him his 'Marriage à-la-Mode' (1673); Otway his 'Titus and Berenice' (1677), and Crowne his 'Charles the Eighth of France' (1672).

In Dryden's dedication there is a remarkable passage. "Your Lordship [he has been praising 'some papers of verses' which he had seen] has but another step to make, and from the patron of wit you may become its tyrant, and oppress our little reputations with more ease than you now protect them." This was prophetic. He oppressed Dryden, Otway, and Crowne, lampooned all three, and had Dryden cudgelled.

Non timet insidias; fures, incendia temnit:
Sollicitas sequitur nullo sub judice lites.
Ille ipse invictis qui subjicit omnia fatis
Zenonis sapiens, NIHIL admiratur et optat.
Socraticique gregis fuit ista scientia quondam,
Scire NIHIL, studio cui nunc incumbitur uni.
Nec quicquam in ludo mavult didicisse juventus,
Ad magnas quia ducit opes, et culmen honorum.
Nosce NIHIL, nosces fertur quod Pythagoreæ
Grano hærere fabæ, cui vox adjuncta negantis.
Multi Mercurio freti duce viscera terræ
Pura liquefaciunt simul, et patrimonia miscent,
Arcano instantes operi, et carbonibus atris,
Qui tandem exhausti damnis, fractique labore,
Inveniunt atque inventum NIHIL usque requirunt,
Hoc dimetiri non ulla decempeda possit:
Nec numeret Libycæ numerum qui callet arenæ:
Et Phœbo ignotum NIHIL est, NIHIL altius astris,
Túque, tibi licet eximium sit mentis acumen,
Omnem in naturam penetrans, et in abdita rerum,
Pace tua, Memmi, NIHIL ignorare vidêris.
Sole tamen NIHIL est, et puro clarius igne.
Tange NIHIL, dicesque NIHIL sine corpore tangi.
Cerne NIHIL, cerni dices NIHIL absque colore.
Surdum audit loquitúrque NIHIL sine voce, volatque
Absque ope pennarum, et graditur sine cruribus ullis.
Absque loco motuque NIHIL per inane vagatur.
Humano generi utilius NIHIL arte medendi.
Ne rhombos igitur, neu Thessala murmura tentet
Idalia vacuum trajectus arundine pectus,
Neu legat Idæo Dictæum in vetrice gramen.
Vulneribus sævi NIHIL auxiliatur amoris.
Vexerit et quemvis trans mœstas portitor undas,
Ad superos imo NIHIL hunc revocabit ab orco.
Inferni NIHIL inflectit præcordia regis,
Parcarûmque colos, et inexorabile pensum.
Obruta Phlegræis campis Titania pubes
Fulmineo sensit NIHIL esse potentius ictu:
Porrigitur magni NIHIL extra mœnia mundi:
Diique NIHIL metuunt. Quid longo carmine plura
Commemorem? virtute NIHIL præstantius ipsa,
Splendidius NIHIL est; NIHIL est Jove denique majus.
Sed tempus finem argutis imponere nugis:
Ne tibi si multa laudem mea carmina charta,
De NIHILO NIHILI pariant fastidia versus."

EARL OF ROSCOMMON.

ROSCOMMON.

1634?–1684.

Born in Ireland — Educated at Caen — Preternatural intelligence of his father's death — Returns to England at the Restoration — His love of play — Endeavours to refine the English language — Death and burial in Westminster Abbey — Purity and excellence of his writings.

Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon,[1] was the son of James Dillon and Elizabeth Wentworth, sister to the Earl of Strafford. He was born in Ireland during the lieutenancy of Strafford, who, being both his uncle and his godfather, gave him his own surname. His father, the third Earl of Roscommon, had been converted by Usher to the Protestant religion; and when the Popish rebellion broke out, Strafford, thinking the family in great danger from the fury of the Irish, sent for his godson, and placed him at his own seat in Yorkshire, where he was instructed in Latin, which he learned so as to write it with purity and elegance, though he was never able to retain the rules of grammar.

Such is the account given by Mr. Fenton, from whose notes on Waller most of this account must be borrowed, though I know not whether all that he relates is certain. The instructor whom he assigns to Roscommon is one Dr. Hall, by whom he cannot mean the famous Hall, then an old man and a bishop.

When the storm broke out upon Strafford, his house was a shelter no longer; and Dillon, by the advice of Usher, was sent to Caen, where the Protestants had then an university, and continued his studies under Bochart.

Young Dillon, who was sent to study under Bochart, and who is represented as having already made great proficiency in

[1] Johnson wrote a Life of Roscommon for the 'Gentleman's Magazine' of May, 1748. This improved and enlarged biography is of course founded on his earlier narrative.

literature, could not be more than nine years old. Strafford went to govern Ireland in 1633, and was put to death eight years afterwards. That he was sent to Caen is certain: that he was a great scholar may be doubted.

At Caen he is said to have had some preternatural intelligence of his father's death.

"The Lord Roscommon, being a boy of ten years of age, at Caen in Normandy, one day was, as it were, madly extravagant in playing, leaping, getting over the table-boards, &c. 'He was wont to be sober enough,' they said; 'God grant this bodes no ill-luck to him!' In the heat of this extravagant fit, he cries out, '*My father is dead.*' A fortnight after, news came from Ireland that his father was dead. This account I had from Mr. Knolles, who was his governor, and then with him,—since secretary to the Earl of Strafford; and I have heard his Lordship's relations confirm the same."—AUBREY'S 'Miscellany,' ed. 1696, p. 89.

The present age is very little inclined to favour any accounts of this kind, nor will the name of Aubrey much recommend it to credit: it ought not, however, to be omitted, because better evidence of a fact cannot easily be found than is here offered, and it must be by preserving such relations that we may at last judge how much they are to be regarded. If we stay to examine this account, we shall see difficulties on both sides: here is the relation of a fact given by a man who had no interest to deceive, and who could not be deceived himself; and here is, on the other hand, a miracle which produces no effect; the order of nature is interrupted to discover not a future but only a distant event, the knowledge of which is of no use to him to whom it is revealed. Between these difficulties what way shall be found? Is reason or testimony to be rejected? I believe what Osborne says of an appearance of sanctity may be applied to such impulses or anticipations as this: *Do not wholly slight them, because they may be true; but do not easily trust them, because they may be false.*[2]

[2] We talked of belief in ghosts. He said, "Sir, I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination, and what

The state both of England and Ireland was at this time such, that he who was absent from either country had very little temptation to return: and therefore Roscommon, when he left Caen, travelled into Italy, and amused himself with its antiquities, and particularly with medals, in which he acquired uncommon skill.

At the Restoration, with the other friends of monarchy, he came to England, was made captain of the band of pensioners, and learned so much of the dissoluteness of the court that he addicted himself immoderately to gaming, by which he was engaged in frequent quarrels, and which undoubtedly brought upon him its usual concomitants, extravagance and distress.

After some time a dispute about part of his estate forced him into Ireland, where he was made, by the Duke of Ormond, captain of the guards, and met with an adventure, thus related by Fenton:

"He was at Dublin as much as ever distempered with the same fatal affection for play, which engaged him in one adventure that well deserves to be related. As he returned to his lodgings from a gaming-table he was attacked in the dark by three ruffians, who were employed to assassinate him. The Earl defended himself with so much resolution that he despatched one of the aggressors; whilst a gentleman, accidentally passing that way, interposed and disarmed another; the third secured himself by flight. This generous assistant was a disbanded officer, of a good family and fair reputation, who, by what we call the partiality of fortune, to avoid censuring the iniquities of the times, wanted even a plain suit of clothes to make a decent

imagination cannot possibly produce. Thus, suppose I should think that I saw a form, and heard a voice cry, 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow, and unless you repent you will certainly be punished;' my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might *imagine* I thus saw and heard, and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me that a particular man had died at a particular place, and a particular hour, a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing, and this fact, with all its circumstances, should afterwards be unquestionably proved, I should in that case be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me."—*Boswell by Croker*, p. 138.

appearance at the castle. But his Lordship on this occasion presenting him to the Duke of Ormond, with great importunity prevailed with his Grace that he might resign his post of captain of the guards to his friend; which for about three years the gentleman enjoyed, and upon his death the Duke returned the commission to his generous benefactor."

When he had finished his business he returned to London; was made Master of the Horse to the Duchess of York; and married the Lady Frances, daughter of the Earl of Burlington, and widow of Colonel Courteney.

He now busied his mind with literary projects, and formed the plan of a society for refining our language and fixing its standard; *in imitation*, says Fenton, *of those learned and polite societies with which he had been acquainted abroad.* In this design his friend Dryden is said to have assisted him.

The same design, it is well known, was revived by Dr. Swift in the ministry of Oxford; but it has never since been publicly mentioned, though at that time great expectations were formed by some of its establishment and its effects. Such a society might, perhaps, without much difficulty be collected; but that it would produce what is expected from it may be doubted.

The Italian Academy seems to have obtained its end. The language was refined, and so fixed that it has changed but little. The French Academy thought that they refined their language, and doubtless thought rightly; but the event has not shown that they fixed it, for the French of the present time is very different from that of the last century.

In this country an academy could be expected to do but little. If an academician's place were profitable, it would be given by interest; if attendance were gratuitous, it would be rarely paid, and no man would endure the least disgust. Unanimity is impossible; and debate would separate the assembly.

But suppose the philological decree made and promulgated, what would be its authority? In absolute governments there is sometimes a general reverence paid to all that has the sanction of power and the countenance of greatness. How little

this is the state of our country needs not to be told. We live in an age in which it is a kind of public sport to refuse all respect that cannot be enforced. The edicts of an English academy would probably be read by many, only that they might be sure to disobey them.

That our language is in perpetual danger of corruption cannot be denied; but what prevention can be found? The present manners of the nation would deride authority, and therefore nothing is left but that every writer should criticise himself.

All hopes of new literary institutions were quickly suppressed by the contentious turbulence of King James's reign;[3] and Roscommon, foreseeing that some violent concussion of the State was at hand, purposed to retire to Rome, alleging that *it was best to sit near the chimney when the chamber smoked;* a sentence of which the application seems not very clear.

His departure was delayed by the gout; and he was so impatient either of hindrance or of pain that he submitted himself to a French empiric, who is said to have repelled the disease into his bowels.

At the moment in which he expired he uttered, with an energy of voice that expressed the most fervent devotion, two lines of his own version of *Dies Iræ:*

> "My God, my Father, and my Friend,
> Do not forsake me in my end."[4]

He died in 1684, and was buried [21st January, 1684-5] with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.[5]

His poetical character is given by Mr. Fenton:

"In his writings," says Fenton, "we view the image of a

[3] Into which Lord Roscommon did not live. Roscommon died before the 21st January, 1684-5, and Charles II. on the 6th Feb., 1684-5.

[4] Copied from Crashaw, and weakened:—

> My Hope, my Fear, my Judge, my Friend,
> Take charge of me and of my end.

[5] His grave is unmarked. In his will, dated 14th January, 1684-5 (only a few days before he died), he describes himself, "although sick of body, yet of sound and perfect mind." His wife was his sole executrix.

mind which was naturally serious and solid—richly furnished and adorned with all the ornaments of learning, and those ornaments unaffectedly disposed in the most regular and elegant order. His imagination might have probably been more fruitful and sprightly if his judgment had been less severe. But that severity (delivered in a masculine, clear, succinct style) contributed to make him so eminent in the didactical manner, that no man, with justice, can affirm he was ever equalled by any of our nation, without confessing at the same time that he is inferior to none. In some other kinds of writing his genius seems to have wanted fire to attain the point of perfection; but who can attain it?"

From this account of the riches of his mind, who would not imagine that they had been displayed in large volumes and numerous performances? Who would not, after the perusal of this character, be surprised to find that all the proofs of this genius, and knowledge, and judgment, are not sufficient to form a single book, or to appear otherwise than in conjunction with the works of some other writer of the same petty size?[6] But thus it is that characters are written: we know somewhat, and we imagine the rest. The observation, that his imagination would probably have been more fruitful and sprightly if his judgment had been less severe, may be answered by a remarker somewhat inclined to cavil, by a contrary supposition, that his judgment

[6] The best edition of Lord Roscommon's works is that published by Tonson in 8vo., 1717. In this collection of the Earl of Roscommon's Poems, says Tonson 'to the reader,' "care has been taken to insert all that I could possibly procure that are truly genuine; there have been several things published under his name which were written by others, the authors of which I could set down if it were material." The truth of this is denied by the author of an account of Pomfret, prefixed to his Remains, who asserts that 'A Prospect of Death' was written by Pomfret many years after Roscommon's decease, and that 'The Prayer of Jeremy' was by a gentleman of the name of Southcot, who first published it himself in 1717.

"I was promised," Tonson continues, "some account of the life and writings of the Earl of Roscommon by a gentleman that was very intimately acquainted with his Lordship and his writings; and but for that expectation this collection had been published some time since." Tonson refers, I believe, to Dr. Knightly Chetwood, whose collections for Roscommon's life are preserved at Cambridge, in vol. 36 of Baker's MSS.

would probably have been less severe if his imagination had been more fruitful. It is ridiculous to oppose judgment to imagination; for it does not appear that men have necessarily less of one as they have more of the other.

We must allow of Roscommon, what Fenton has not mentioned so distinctly as he ought, and what is yet very much to his honour, that he is perhaps the only correct writer in verse before Addison; and that, if there are not so many or so great beauties in his compositions as in those of some contemporaries, there are at least fewer faults. Nor is this his highest praise, for Mr. Pope has celebrated him as the only moral writer of King Charles's reign:

> "Unhappy Dryden! in all Charles's days
> Roscommon only boasts unspotted lays."

His great work is his 'Essay on Translated Verse,'[7] of which Dryden writes thus in the preface to his 'Miscellanies:'[8]

"It was my Lord Roscommon's 'Essay on Translated Verse,'" says Dryden, "which made me uneasy, till I tried whether or no I was capable of following his rules, and of reducing the speculation into practice. For many a fair precept in poetry is like a seeming demonstration in the mathematics, very specious in the diagram, but failing in the mechanic operation. I think I have generally observed his instructions; I am sure my reason is sufficiently convinced both of their truth and usefulness; which, in other words, is to confess no less a vanity than to pretend that I have, at least in some places, made examples to his rules."

This declaration of Dryden will, I am afraid, be found little more than one of those cursory civilities[9] which one author pays to another; for when the sum of Lord Roscommon's precepts is collected, it will not be easy to discover how they can qualify

[7] An Essay on Translated Verse. By the Earl of Roscommon. London: Tonson, 1684, 4to.

[8] Sylvæ, or the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies, 1685, 8vo. Tonson.

[9] As the civility was not in print in Lord Roscommon's life-time, we should not take it for more than Johnson is willing to allow it to be worth.

their reader for a better performance of translation than might have been attained by his own reflections.

He that can abstract his mind from the elegance of the poetry, and confine it to the sense of the precepts, will find no other direction than that the author should be suitable to the translator's genius; that he should be such as may deserve a translation; that he who intends to translate him should endeavour to understand him; that perspicuity should be studied, and unusual and uncouth names sparingly inserted; and that the style of the original should be copied in its elevation and depression. These are the rules that are celebrated as so definite and important, and for the delivery of which to mankind so much honour has been paid. Roscommon has indeed deserved his praises had they been given with discernment, and bestowed not on the rules themselves, but the art with which they are introduced, and the decorations with which they are adorned.

The 'Essay,' though generally excellent, is not without its faults. The story of the Quack, borrowed from Boileau, was not worth the importation: he has confounded the British and Saxon mythology:

> "I grant that from some mossy idol oak,
> In double rhymes, our *Thor* and *Woden* spoke."

The oak, as I think Gildon has observed, belonged to the British druids, and Thor and Woden were Saxon deities. Of the *double rhymes*, which he so liberally supposes, he certainly had no knowledge.

His interposition of a long paragraph of blank verses is unwarrantably licentious. Latin poets might as well have introduced a series of iambics among their heroics.[10]

[10] The interposition is not in the first edition. Let me observe here that the alterations are numerous, and in all respects for the better. The famous couplet—

> Immodest words admit of no defence,
> For want of decency is want of sense,

stands thus in the first edition—

> Immodest words (whatever the pretence)
> Always want decency, and often sense.

His next work[11] is the translation of the 'Art of Poetry,' which has received, in my opinion, not less praise than it deserves. Blank verse, left merely to its numbers, has little operation either on the ear or mind: it can hardly support itself without bold figures and striking images. A poem frigidly didactic, without rhyme, is so near to prose that the reader only scorns it for pretending to be verse.

Having disentangled himself from the difficulties of rhyme, he may justly be expected to give the sense of Horace with great exactness, and to suppress no subtlety of sentiment for the difficulty of expressing it. This demand, however, his translation will not satisfy; what he found obscure, I do not know that he has ever cleared.

Among his smaller works, the 'Eclogue' of Virgil and the 'Dies Iræ' are well translated; though the best line in the 'Dies Iræ' is borrowed from Dryden.[12] In return, succeeding poets have borrowed from Roscommon.

In the 'Verses on the Lap Dog' the pronouns *thou* and *you* are offensively confounded; and the turn at the end is from Waller.

His versions of the two Odes of Horace are made with great liberty, which is not recompensed by much elegance or vigour.

His political verses are sprightly; and when they were written must have been very popular.

Of the scene of 'Guarini,' and the prologue of 'Pompey,' Mrs. Philips, in her letters to Sir Charles Cotterel,[13] has given the history.

"My Lord Roscommon," says she,[14] "is a very ingenious person, of excellent natural parts, and certainly the most hopeful young nobleman in Ireland. He has paraphrased a Psalm

[11] Not his next. The translation of the 'Art of Poetry' preceded the Essay on Translated Verse. The former appeared in 1680, in 4to. (printed for Henry Herringman), and is advertised as published in the 'London Gazette' of 24-27 Nov., 1679. Waller's complimentary verses to Roscommon, 'Of this Translation and the use of Poetry,' are prefixed to the first edition.

[12] Did not Johnson mean Crashaw?

[13] Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus. London, 8vo., 1705, p. 79.

[14] Dublin, Oct. 19, 1662.

admirably well, and the scene of 'Care selve Beate,' in 'Pastor Fido,' very finely; in many places much better than Sir Richard Fanshaw. He begins it thus:—

> 'Dear happy groves, and you the dark retreat
> Of silent Horror, Rest's eternal seat!' &c.

This last he undertook purely out of compliment to me, having heard me say 'twas the best scene in the Italian, and the worst in the English. He was but two hours about it, having certainly as easy and fluent a vein as ever I observed or heard of, and which 'tis great pity he does not improve by practice."

From these lines, which are since somewhat mended, it appears that he did not think a work of two hours fit to endure the eye of criticism without revisal.

When Mrs. Philips was in Ireland, some ladies that had seen her translation of 'Pompey' resolved to bring it on the stage at Dublin; and, to promote their design, Lord Roscommon gave them a prologue, and Sir Edward Dering an epilogue; "which," says she,[15] "are the best performances of those kinds I ever saw." If this is not criticism, it is at least gratitude. The thought of bringing Cæsar and Pompey into Ireland, the only country over which Cæsar never had any power, is lucky.

Of Roscommon's works, the judgment of the public seems to be right. He is elegant, but not great; he never labours after exquisite beauties, and he seldom falls into gross faults. His versification is smooth, but rarely vigorous, and his rhymes are remarkably exact. He improved taste, if he did not enlarge knowledge, and may be numbered among the benefactors to English literature.[16]

[15] Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus, 8vo., 1705, p. 120.

[16] Such was Roscommon—not more learn'd than good,
With manners generous as his noble blood:
To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,
And every author's merit but his own.
POPE: *Essay on Criticism.*

THOMAS OTWAY.

OTWAY.

1651–1685.

Born at Trotton, in Sussex — Educated at Winchester and Oxford — Fails as an Actor — Great Success as a Dramatist — Serves as a Cornet in the English Army in Flanders — His Poverty and tragic End — Buried in St. Clement's Danes — His Works and Character.

Of Thomas Otway, one of the first names in the English drama, little is known; nor is there any part of that little which his biographer can take pleasure in relating.

He was born at Trotton, in Sussex, March 3, 1651-2, the son of Mr. Humphrey Otway, rector of Woolbeding.[1] From Winchester-school, where he was educated, he was entered, in 1669, a commoner of Christ Church [Oxford]; but left the university without a degree, whether for want of money, or from impatience of academical restraint, or mere eagerness to mingle with the world, is not known.

It seems likely that he was in hope of being busy and conspicuous; for he went to London, and commenced player, but found himself unable to gain any reputation on the stage.[2]

This kind of inability he shared with Shakespeare and Jonson, as he shared likewise some of their excellences. It seems reasonable to expect that a great dramatic poet should without difficulty become a great actor; that he who can feel, could

[1] He was at the time of his son's birth curate of Trotton. After the Restoration he became rector of the adjoining parish of Woolbeding, and died in 1670. —*Dallaway's Sussex*, i. 221.

[2] *Note.*—In this play ['The Jealous Bridegroom,' by Mrs. Behn] Mr. Otway the poet having an inclination to turn actor, Mrs. Behn gave him the King in the play for a probation part; but he being not used to the stage, the full house put him to such a sweat and tremendous agony, being dash't, spoilt him for an actor. Mr. Nat Lee had the same fate in acting Duncan in 'Macbeth,' ruin'd him for an actor too.—Downes: *Roscius Anglicanus*, 12mo., 1708, p. 34.

express; that he who can excite passion, should exhibit with great readiness its external modes: but, since experience has fully proved that of those powers, whatever be their affinity, one may be possessed in a great degree by him who has very little of the other, it must be allowed that they depend upon different faculties, or on different use of the same faculty; that the actor must have a pliancy of mien, a flexibility of countenance, and a variety of tones, which the poet may be easily supposed to want; or that the attention of the poet and the player have been differently employed; the one has been considering thought, and the other action—one has watched the heart, and the other contemplated the face.

Though he could not gain much notice as a player, he felt in himself such powers as might qualify for a dramatic author; and in 1675, his twenty-fifth year, produced 'Alcibiades,' a tragedy; whether from the 'Alcibiade' of Palaprat, I have not means to inquire.[3] Langbaine, the great detector of plagiarism, is silent.

In 1677 he published 'Titus and Berenice' [a tragedy], translated from Rapin, with the 'Cheats of Scapin' [a farce], from Molière;[4] and in 1678 'Friendship in Fashion,' a comedy, which, whatever might be its first reception,[5] was, upon its revival at Drury Lane in 1749,[6] hissed off the stage for immorality and obscenity.

Want of morals or of decency did not in those days exclude any man from the company of the wealthy and the gay, if he brought with him any powers of entertainment; and Otway is said to have been at this time a favourite companion of the dissolute wits. But as he who desires no virtue in his companion has no virtue in himself, those whom Otway frequented had no purpose of doing more for him than to pay his reckoning. They

[3] Palaprat wrote no play of this name. The 'Alcibiade' of Campistron was not brought upon the French stage till Dec. 1685.

[4] This play [Titus and Berenice], with the farce, being perfectly well acted, had good success.—Downes: *Roscius Anglicanus*, 12mo., 1708.

[5] This [Friendship in Fashion] is a very diverting play, and was acted with general applause.—*Langbaine, ed.* 1691, p. 398.

[6] 22nd January, 1749-50.

desired only to drink and laugh; their fondness was without benevolence, and their familiarity without friendship. Men of wit, says one of Otway's biographers, received at that time no favour from the great but to share their riots, *from which they were dismissed again to their own narrow circumstances. Thus they languished in poverty without the support of innocence.*

Some exception, however, must be made. The Earl of Plymouth, one of King Charles's natural sons, procured for him a cornet's commission in some troops then sent into Flanders. But Otway did not prosper in his military character, for he soon left his commission behind him, whatever was the reason, and came back to London in extreme indigence, which Rochester mentions with merciless insolence in the 'Session of the Poets:'

> "Tom Otway came next, Tom Shadwell's dear zany,
> And swears for heroics he writes best of any;
> Don Carlos his pockets so amply had fill'd,
> That his mange was quite cured, and his lice were all kill'd.
> But Apollo had seen his face on the stage,
> And prudently did not think fit to engage
> The scum of a play-house, for the prop of an age."

'Don Carlos,' from which he is represented as having received so much benefit, was played in 1676. It appears by the lampoon to have had great success, and is said to have been played thirty nights together.[7] This, however, it is reasonable to doubt, as so long a continuance of one play upon the stage is a very wide deviation from the practice of that time, when the ardour for theatrical entertainments was not yet diffused through the whole people, and the audience, consisting nearly of the same persons, could be drawn together only by variety.

[7] Johnson copies the writer in Cibber's 'Lives,' ii. 335. 'Don Carlos' was Otway's "Second Play." "All the parts," says Downes, the prompter at the Duke's theatre when it was brought out, "being admirably acted, it lasted successively ten days:"—he adds, that "it got more money than any preceding modern tragedy."

Mr. Betterton observed to me many years ago that 'Don Carlos' succeeded much better than either 'Venice Preserved' or 'The Orphan,' and was infinitely more applauded and followed for many years.—*Barton Booth to Aaron Hill*, June 19, 1732.

The 'Orphan' was exhibited in 1680. This is one of the few plays that keep possession of the stage, and has pleased for almost a century, through all the vicissitudes of dramatic fashion. Of this play nothing new can easily be said. It is a domestic tragedy drawn from middle life. Its whole power is upon the affections; for it is not written with much comprehension of thought or elegance of expression. But, if the heart is interested, many other beauties may be wanting, yet not be missed.

The same year [1680] produced the 'History and Fall of Caius Marius;' much of which is borrowed from the 'Romeo and Juliet' of Shakespeare.

In 1683 [1681] was published the first, and next year [1684] the second, parts of 'The Soldier's Fortune,' two comedies now forgotten; and in 1685 [Feb. 1680-1][8] his last and greatest dramatic work,[9] 'Venice Preserved,' a tragedy which still continues to be one of the favourites of the public, notwithstanding the want of morality in the original design, and the despicable scenes of vile comedy with which he has diversified his tragic action. By comparing this with his 'Orphan,' it will appear that his images were by time become stronger, and his language more energetic. The striking passages are in every mouth; and the public seems to judge rightly of the faults and excellences of this play—that it is the work of a man not attentive to decency, nor zealous for virtue, but of one who conceived forcibly, and drew originally, by consulting nature in his own breast.[10]

Together with those plays[11] he wrote the poems which are in

[8] Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 168.

[9] 'Venice Preserved' was not Otway's *last* dramatic work. The last was 'The Atheist, or the Second Part of the Soldier's Fortune.' 'The Soldier's Fortune,' says Downes, "took extraordinarily well."

[10] Tom Davies says (Dram. Misc. iii. 253) that old Jacob Tonson purchased the copyright of 'Venice Preserved' for fifteen pounds.

[11] He left an unfinished tragedy, referred to in an advertisement in L'Estrange's Observator of the 27th Nov., 1686:

"Whereas Mr. Thomas Otway, some time before his death, made four acts of a play; whoever can give notice in whose hands the copy lies, either to Mr. Thomas Betterton or to Mr. William Smith at the Theatre Royal, shall be well rewarded for his pains." "Some pretend," says Giles Jacob, "that he [Otway] left a finished tragedy behind him; but that piece is a poor perform-

the present collection,[12] and translated from the French the 'History of the Triumvirate.'[13]

All this was performed before he was thirty-four years old; for he died April 14, 1685, in a manner which I am unwilling to mention. Having been compelled by his necessities to contract debts, and hunted, as is supposed, by the tarriers of the law, he retired to a public-house on Tower-hill,[14] where he is said to have died of want; or, as it is related by one of his biographers, by swallowing, after a long fast, a piece of bread which charity had supplied. He went out, as is reported, almost naked in the rage of hunger, and, finding a gentleman in a neighbouring coffee-house, asked him for a shilling: the gentleman gave him a guinea; and Otway going away bought a roll, and was choked with the first mouthful. All this I hope is not true; and there is this ground of better hope, that Pope,[15] who lived near enough to be well informed, relates in Spence's Memorials that he died of a fever caught by violent pursuit of a thief that had robbed one of his friends.[16] But that indigence, and its concomitants, sorrow and despondency, pressed hard upon him, has never been denied, whatever immediate cause might bring him to the grave.[17]

ance, not in Mr. Otway's hand, and very unworthy of him."—JACOB: *Lives*, 8vo., 1723, vol. i. p. 194.

[12] Known as 'Johnson's British Poets.'

[13] Printed after his death, 8vo., 1686.

[14] Jacob's 'Lives of the Poets,' 8vo., 1723, vol. i. p. 194; Gent's. Mag. for 1745, p. 99.

[15] Johnson has written Pope for Dennis. See next note.

[16] Otway had an intimate friend (one Blackstone) who was shot; the murderer fled toward Dover, and Otway pursued him. In his return he drank water when violently heated, and so got a fever, which was the death of him.—DENNIS: *Spence by Singer*, p. 44.

Dennis, in his Observations on Pope's translation of Homer, 8vo., 1717, says [p. 5] that Otway died "in an alehouse." This, however, is not inconsistent with this account.—MALONE: *Spence by Malone*, p. 100.

[17] He died unmarried, and was buried on the 16th April, 1685, in the churchyard of St. Clement's Danes. "His person was of the middle size, about five feet seven inches in height, inclinable to fatness. He had a thoughtful, speaking eye, and that was all."—W. G. in 'Gent. Mag.' for 1745, p. 99.

There is a large mezzotinto of Otway, P. Lely pinxit [W. Faithorne, junr., sc.], which I take to be genuine. The Houbraken head is said to have been painted by Mrs. Beale, and when Houbraken engraved it was in the possession of Gilbert West the poet.

Of the poems which the present collection admits, the longest is the 'Poet's Complaint of his Muse,'[18] part of which I do not understand; and in that which is less obscure I find little to commend. The language is often gross, and the numbers are harsh. Otway had not much cultivated versification, nor much replenished his mind with general knowledge. His principal power was in moving the passions; to which Dryden in his latter years left an illustrious testimony.[19] He appears, by some of his verses, to have been a zealous royalist, and had what was in those times the common reward of loyalty—he lived and died neglected.[20]

[18] 'The Poet's Complaint of his Muse, or a Satire against Libels. A Poem. By Thomas Otway. London: printed for Thomas Norman, 1680,' 4to. His only other separate publication (his plays excepted) was 'Windsor Castle, a monument to our late sovereign K. Charles II. of ever blessed memory, &c. London: printed for Charles Brome, 1685,' 4to.

[19] I will not defend everything in his 'Venice Preserved,' but I must bear this testimony to his memory, that the passions are truly touched in it, though perhaps there is somewhat to be desired, both in the grounds of them and in the height and elegance of expression; but nature is there, which is the greatest beauty.—Dryden: *Pref. to Fresnoy's Art of Painting*, 1695.

The talents of Otway, in his scenes of passionate affection, rival at least, and sometimes excel, those of Shakespeare. More tears have been shed, probably, for the sorrows of Belvidera and Monimia than for those of Juliet and Desdemona.—Sir Walter Scott: *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. vi. p. 356.

[20] The parts of Monimia in 'The Orphan,' and Belvidera in 'Venice Preserved,' were originally played by Mrs. Barry. All Otway's plays but the last ('The Atheist') were produced for the first time at the Duke's Theatre, in Dorset Gardens.

The best edition of Otway's works is that by Thornton, 3 vols. 8vo., 1813.

EDMUND WALLER.

WALLER.

1605–1687.

Born at Coleshill, in Hertfordshire — Educated at Eton and Cambridge — Returned to Parliament — His first Poetry — Marries a rich Heiress — Sacharissa — His second Marriage — Is a Member of the Long Parliament — Cromwell and Hampden — Publishes his Poems — His Plot in favour of Charles I. — His Life in danger — Escapes with a heavy Fine — Lives in France — Is allowed to return — His Panegyric on Cromwell — His Poem on Charles II. — His Life at the Restoration — Death and Burial at Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire — Works and Character.

Edmund Waller was born on the 3rd of March, 1605,[1] at Coleshill, in Hertfordshire. His father was Robert Waller, Esq., of Agmondesham, in Buckinghamshire, whose family was originally a branch of the Kentish Wallers;[2] and his mother was the daughter of John Hampden, of Hampden, in the same county, and sister to Hampden the zealot of rebellion.[3]

His father died while he was yet an infant, but left him a yearly income of three thousand five hundred pounds; which, rating together the value of money and the customs of life, we may reckon more than equivalent to ten thousand at the present time.

He was educated, by the care of his mother, at Eton, and removed afterwards to King's College in Cambridge. He was sent to parliament in his eighteenth, if not in his sixteenth year, and frequented the court of James I., where he heard a very

[1] Baptized the 9th. See Clutterbuck's 'Herts,' i. 349. The father made his will 21st December, 1615, leaving his wife his executrix, and five hundred pounds a-piece to his younger sons Griffith and Stephen on their coming of age. A codicil bequeaths a like sum to a newly-born son, of the name of John. Robert Waller died in 1616, and his will was proved by Anne Waller, his widow.

[2] Of Groombridge and Speldhurst, near Tunbridge Wells. Richard Waller of Groombridge took the Duke of Orleans prisoner at the battle of Agincourt, and had the Duke in custody at Groombridge for twenty-four years.

[3] Waller was not the nephew of Hampden. He was first cousin to Hampden, and also first cousin to Cromwell.

remarkable conversation, which the writer of the Life prefixed to his Works,[4] who seems to have been well informed of facts, though he may sometimes err in chronology, has delivered as indubitably certain:

"He found Dr. Andrews, Bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, Bishop of Durham, standing behind his Majesty's chair; and there happened something extraordinary," continues this writer, "in the conversation those prelates had with the King, on which Mr. Waller did often reflect. His Majesty asked the bishops, 'My lords, cannot I take my subjects' money when I want it, without all this formality of parliament?' The Bishop of Durham readily answered, 'God forbid, Sir, but you should: you are the breath of our nostrils.' Whereupon the King turned and said to the Bishop of Winchester, 'Well, my lord, what say you?' 'Sir,' replied the bishop, 'I have no skill to judge of parliamentary cases.' The King answered, 'No put-offs, my lord; answer me presently.' 'Then, Sir,' said he, 'I think it is lawful for you to take my brother Neale's money, for he offers it.' Mr. Waller said the company was pleased with this answer, and the wit of it seemed to affect the King; for, a certain lord coming in soon after, his Majesty cried out, 'Oh, my lord, they say you lig with my lady.' 'No, Sir,' says his lordship, in confusion; 'but I like her company because she has so much wit.' 'Why then,' says the King, 'do you not lig with my Lord of Winchester there?'"

Waller's political and poetical life began nearly together. In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears in his works, on 'The Prince's Escape at St. Andero'—a piece which justifies the observation made by one of his editors,[5] that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a style which perhaps will never be obsolete; and that, "were we to judge only by the

[4] To the eighth edition, Tonson, 1711, 8vo. The writer (Atterbury, it is said, Warton on Pope, ii. 366, ed. 1782) knew Dr. Birch, the poet's son-in-law.

[5] Atterbury, 'Preface to Waller's Poems,' 1690. Atterbury meditated an edition of Waller, and has left an admirable imitation of him in his best manner. Another edition was contemplated by Keck, who bought the Chandos Portrait of Shakespeare from Mrs. Barry. Keck died in 1719, and in 1729 Fenton edited Waller in a 4to. volume, for old Jacob Tonson.

wording, we could not know what was wrote at twenty, and what at fourscore." His versification was, in his first essay, such as it appears in his last performance. By the perusal of Fairfax's translation of 'Tasso,' to which, as Dryden[6] relates, he confessed himself indebted for the smoothness of his numbers, and by his own nicety of observation, he had already formed such a system of metrical harmony as he never afterwards much needed, or much endeavoured, to improve. Denham corrected his numbers by experience, and gained ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his age; but what was acquired by Denham was inherited by Waller.

The next poem, of which the subject seems to fix the time, is supposed by Mr. Fenton to be the 'Address to the Queen,' which he considers as congratulating her arrival, in Waller's twentieth year. He is apparently mistaken; for the mention of the nation's obligations to her frequent pregnancy proves that it was written when she had brought many children.[7] We have, therefore, no date of any other poetical production before that which the murder [Aug. 1628] of the Duke of Buckingham occasioned; the steadiness with which the King received the news in the chapel deserved indeed to be rescued from oblivion.

Neither of these pieces that seem to carry their own dates could have been the sudden effusion of fancy. In the verses on the Prince's escape, the prediction of his marriage with the princess of France must have been written after the event; in the other, the promises of the King's kindness to the descendants of Buckingham, which could not be properly praised till it had appeared by its effects, show that time was taken for revision and improvement. It is not known that they were published till they appeared long afterwards with other poems.[8]

[6] Many besides myself have heard our famous Waller own that he derived the harmony of his numbers from the Godfrey of Bulloigne, which was turned into English by Mr. Fairfax.—DRYDEN: *Preface to Fables*, 1700.

[7] Fenton is right. Johnson has confounded two poems, 'To the Queen, occasioned upon sight of Her Majesty's Picture,' and the one 'Of the Queen.' It is in the latter that the allusion to her frequent pregnancy occurs.

[8] The earliest volume of verse published by Waller is his 'Poems,' 12mo. 1645. His first printed poem is 'Upon Ben Jonson,' part of the 'Jonsonus Virbius,' 4to., 1638.

Waller was not one of those idolaters of praise who cultivate their minds at the expense of their fortunes. Rich as he was by inheritance, he took care early to grow richer, by marrying Mrs. Banks,[9] a great heiress in the city, whom the interest of the Court was employed to obtain for Mr. Crofts.[10] Having brought him a son, who died young, and a daughter, who was afterwards married to Mr. Dormer of Oxfordshire,[11] she died in childbed, and left him a widower of about five-and-twenty, gay and wealthy, to please himself with another marriage.

Being too young to resist beauty, and probably too vain to think himself resistible, he fixed his heart, perhaps half fondly and half ambitiously, upon the Lady Dorothy Sidney, eldest daughter of the Earl of Leicester, whom he courted by all the poetry in which Sacharissa is celebrated; the name is derived from the Latin appellation of *sugar*, and implies, if it means anything, a spiritless mildness and dull good-nature, such as excites rather tenderness and esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honoured or admired.

Yet he describes Sacharissa as a sublime, predominating beauty, of lofty charms and imperious influence, on whom he looks with amazement rather than fondness, whose chains he wishes, though in vain, to break, and whose presence is *wine* that *inflames to madness.*

His acquaintance with this high-born dame gave wit no opportunity of boasting its influence; she was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with

[9] Anna, daughter of Edward Banks. "The next is the extraordinary paper I mentioned; it shows at once how far the royal authority in that age thought it had a right to extend, and how low it condescended to extend itself:—

"'Docquett, 28 November, 1628.—A letter to Louysa Cole, the relict of James Cole, in favour of Abraham Vanderdort, his Majestie's servant, recommending him to her in the way of marriage. Procured by the Lord Viscount Conway.'

"What was the success of this royal interposition I nowhere find."—WALPOLE: *Anecdotes of Painting*, ed. Dall. ii. 104.

[10] William Crofts, afterwards (1658) Baron Crofts of Saxham (d. 1677).

[11] Of Rousham, where is still to be seen a very fine portrait of Waller. The grounds of Rousham were laid out by Pope.

disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married in 1639[12] the Earl of Sunderland, who died [Sept. 1643] at Newbury in the King's cause; and, in her old age, meeting somewhere[13] with Waller, asked him when he would again write such verses upon her: "When you are as young, Madam," said he, "and as handsome as you were then."[14]

In this part of his life it was that he was known to Clarendon, among the rest of the men who were eminent in that age for genius and literature; but known so little to his advantage, that they who read his character will not much condemn Sacharissa, that she did not descend from her rank to his embraces, nor think every excellence comprised in wit.

The lady was indeed inexorable; but his uncommon qualifications, though they had no power upon her, recommended him to the scholars and statesmen; and undoubtedly many beauties of that time, however they might receive his love, were proud of his praises. Who they were, whom he dignifies with poetical names, cannot now be known. Amoret, according to Mr. Fenton, was the Lady Sophia Murray. Perhaps by traditions preserved in families more may be discovered.[15]

From the verses written at Penshurst, it has been collected that he diverted his disappointment by a voyage; and his biographers, from his poem on the Whales, think it not improbable that he visited the Bermudas; but it seems much more likely that he should amuse himself with forming an imaginary scene,

[12] When she was twenty-two, the parish-register of Isleworth recording her baptism on the 5th of October, 1617.

[13] This was said "at the late Lady Wharton's at Woburn, near Beaconsfield." —'Life of Waller,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo., 1711, p. xvii.

[14] 'Life of Waller,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xvii.

The Earl of Sunderland died in 1643, and his widow (Sacharissa) in 1683, having married Robert Smythe, Esq., of the Strangford family. In a letter to Lord Halifax, written in 1680, she says, "Mrs. Middleton and I have lost old Waller; he is gone away frightened."—Miss Berry's *Lady Rachael Russell*, p. 357, 8vo. ed.

[15] Nothing, however, has been discovered; for curiosity has been awakened since Johnson wrote more to our Elizabethan poets; and few have cared to inquire who were the heroines of Waller and the rivals of Sacharissa. It is now, I fear, too late to make any discovery.

than that so important an incident as a visit to America should have been left floating in conjectural probability.

From his twenty-eighth to his thirty-fifth year, he wrote his pieces on the Reduction of Sallee; on the Reparation of St. Paul's; to the King on his Navy; the panegyric on the Queen Mother; the two poems to the Earl of Northumberland; and perhaps others, of which the time cannot be discovered.

When he had lost all hopes of Sacharissa, he looked round him for an easier conquest, and gained a lady of the family of Bresse, or Breaux. The time of his marriage is not exactly known. It has not been discovered that his wife was won by his poetry; nor is anything told of her but that she brought him many children. He doubtless praised some whom he would have been afraid to marry, and perhaps married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestic happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow; and many airs and sallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve. There are charms made only for distant admiration. No spectacle is nobler than a blaze.

Of this wife, his biographers have recorded that she gave him five sons and eight daughters.

During the long interval of Parliament, he is represented as living among those with whom it was most honourable to converse, and enjoying an exuberant fortune with that independence and liberty of speech and conduct which wealth ought always to produce. He was however considered as the kinsman of Hampden, and was therefore supposed by the courtiers not to favour them.

When the Parliament was called in 1640, it appeared that Waller's political character had not been mistaken. The King's demand of a supply produced one of those noisy speeches which disaffection and discontent regularly dictate; a speech filled with hyperbolical complaints of imaginary grievances. "They," says he,[16] "who think themselves already undone, can never

[16] 'A Speech to the House of Commons, April 22, 1640.'

apprehend themselves in danger; and they who have nothing left can never give freely." Political truth is equally in danger from the praises of courtiers, and the exclamations of patriots.

He then proceeds to rail at the clergy, being sure at that time of a favourable audience. His topic is such as will always serve its purpose; an accusation of acting and preaching only for preferment: and he exhorts the Commons *carefully* to *provide* for their *protection against pulpit law.*

It always gratifies curiosity to trace a sentiment. Waller has in his speech quoted Hooker in one passage; and in another has copied him, without quoting. "Religion," says Waller, "ought to be the first thing in our purposes and desires; but that which is first in dignity is not always to precede in order of time; for well-being supposes a being; and the first impediment which men naturally endeavour to remove, is the want of those things without which they cannot subsist. God first assigned unto Adam maintenance of life, and gave him a title to the rest of the creatures before he appointed a law to observe."

"God first assigned Adam," says Hooker, "maintenance of life, and then appointed him a law to observe.—True it is that the kingdom of God must be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but, inasmuch as a righteous life presupposeth life—inasmuch as to live virtuously it is impossible, except we live,—therefore the first impediment which naturally we endeavour to remove is penury, and want of things without which we cannot live."

The speech is vehement; but the great position—that grievances ought to be redressed before supplies are granted—is agreeable enough to law and reason: nor was Waller, if his biographer may be credited, such an enemy to the King as not to wish his distresses lightened; for he relates, "that the King sent particularly to Waller to second his demand of some subsidies to pay off the army; and Sir Henry Vane objecting against first voting a supply, because the King would not accept unless it came up to his proportion, Mr. Waller spoke earnestly

to Sir Thomas Jermyn, comptroller of the household, to save his master from the effects of so bold a falsity; 'for,' he said, 'I am but a country gentleman, and cannot pretend to know the King's mind:' but Sir Thomas durst not contradict the secretary; and his son, the Earl of St. Alban's, afterwards told Mr. Waller, that his father's cowardice ruined the King." [17]

In the Long Parliament, which, unhappily for the nation, met November 3, 1640, Waller represented Agmondesham the third time, and was considered by the discontented party as a man sufficiently trusty and acrimonious to be employed in managing the prosecution of Judge Crawley for his opinion in favour of ship-money; and his speech shows that he did not disappoint their expectations. He was probably the more ardent, as his uncle [18] Hampden had been particularly engaged in the dispute, and, by a sentence which seems generally to be thought unconstitutional, particularly injured.

He was not, however, a bigot to his party, nor adopted all their opinions. When the great question, whether Episcopacy ought to be abolished, was debated, he spoke against the innovation so coolly, so reasonably, and so firmly, that it is not without great injury to his name that his speech, which was as follows, has been hitherto omitted in his works:—

"There is no doubt but the sense of what this nation had suffered from the present bishops hath produced these complaints; and the apprehensions men have of suffering the like in time to come, make so many desire the taking away of Episcopacy: but I conceive it is possible that we may not now take a right measure of the minds of the people by their petitions; for, when they subscribed them, the bishops were armed with a dangerous commission of making new canons, imposing new oaths, and the like; but now we have disarmed them of that power. These petitioners lately did look upon Episcopacy as a beast armed with horns and claws; but now that we have cut and pared them (and may, if we see cause, yet reduce it into narrower bounds), it may, perhaps, be more agreeable. How-

[17] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xxi.
[18] Cousin. See note, p. 219.

soever, if they be still in passion, it becomes us soberly to consider the right use and antiquity thereof; and not to comply further with a general desire than may stand with a general good.

"We have already showed that Episcopacy and the evils thereof are mingled like water and oil: we have also, in part, severed them; but I believe you will find that our laws and the present government of the Church are mingled like wine and water; so inseparable, that the abrogation of at least a hundred of our laws is desired in these petitions. I have often heard a noble answer of the Lords, commended in this House, to a proposition of like nature, but of less consequence: they gave no other reason of their refusal but this, *Nolumus mutare Leges Angliæ:* it was the bishops who so answered them: and it would become the dignity and wisdom of this House to answer the people now with a *Nolumus mutare.*

"I see some are moved with a number of hands against the bishops, which, I confess, rather inclines me to their defence; for I look upon Episcopacy as a counterscarp, or outwork, which, if it be taken by this assault of the people, and withal this mystery once revealed, *That we must deny them nothing when they ask it thus in troops*, we may, in the next place, have as hard a task to defend our property as we have lately had to recover it from the Prerogative. If, by multiplying hands and petitions, they prevail for an equality in things ecclesiastical, the next demand perhaps may be *Lex Agraria*, the like equality in things temporal.

"The Roman story tells us that when the people began to flock about the senate, and were more curious to direct and know what was done than to obey, that commonwealth soon came to ruin: their *Legem rogare* grew quickly to be a *Legem ferre:* and after, when their legions had found that they could make a dictator, they never suffered the senate to have a voice any more in such election.

"If these great innovations proceed, I shall expect a flat and level in learning too, as well as in church preferments: *Honos alit Artes.* And though it be true that grave and pious men

do study for learning' sake, and embrace virtue for itself, yet it is true, that youth, which is the season when learning is gotten, is not without ambition: nor will ever take pains to excel in anything, when there is not some hope of excelling others in reward and dignity.

"There are two reasons chiefly alleged against our Church government:

"First, Scripture, which, as some men think, points out another form.

"Second, The abuses of the present superiors.

"For Scripture, I will not dispute it in this place; but I am confident that whenever an equal division of lands and goods shall be desired, there will be as many places in Scripture found out which seem to favour that as there are now alleged against the prelacy or preferment of the Church. And as for abuses, when you are now in the Remonstrance told what this and that poor man hath suffered by the bishops, you may be presented with a thousand instances of poor men that have received hard measure from their landlords; and of worldly goods abused, to the injury of others, and disadvantage of the owners.

"And therefore, Mr. Speaker, my humble motion is, that we may settle men's minds herein; and by a question declare our resolution *to reform*, that is, *not to abolish Episcopacy*." [19]

It cannot but be wished that he who could speak in this manner had been able to act with spirit and uniformity.

When the Commons began to set the royal authority at open defiance, Waller is said to have withdrawn from the House, and to have returned with the King's permission; and when the King set up his standard, he sent him a thousand broad pieces.[20] He continued, however, to sit in the rebellious conventicle; but "spoke," says Clarendon, "with great sharpness and freedom, which (now there were so few there that used it, and there was no danger of being over-voted) was not restrained; and therefore used as an argument against those who were gone upon

[19] This speech has been retrieved, from a paper printed at that time, by the writers of the 'Parliamentary History.'—JOHNSON.

[20] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xxii.

pretence that they were not suffered to declare their opinion freely in the House, which could not be believed, when all men knew what liberty Mr. Waller took, and spoke every day with impunity against the sense and proceedings of the House." [21]

Waller, as he continued to sit, was one of the commissioners nominated by the Parliament to treat with the King at Oxford; and when they were presented, the King said to him, "Though you are the last, you are not the lowest nor the least in my favour." [22] Whitelock, who, being another of the commissioners, was witness of this kindness, imputes it to the King's knowledge of the plot in which Waller appeared afterwards to have been engaged against the Parliament. Fenton, with equal probability, believes that this attempt to promote the royal cause arose from his sensibility of the King's tenderness. Whitelock says nothing of his behaviour at Oxford: he was sent with several others to add pomp to the commission, but was not one of those to whom the trust of treating was imparted.

The engagement, known by the name of Waller's Plot, was soon afterwards discovered. Waller had a brother-in-law, Tomkyns, who was clerk of the Queen's Council, and at the same time had a very numerous acquaintance and great influence in the city. Waller and he, conversing with great confidence, told both their own secrets and those of their friends; and, surveying the wide extent of their conversation, imagined that they found in the majority of all ranks great disapprobation of the violence of the Commons, and unwillingness to continue the war. They knew that many favoured the King, whose fear concealed their loyalty; and many desired peace, though they durst not oppose the clamour for war; and they imagined that if those who had these good intentions could be informed of their own strength, and enabled by intelligence to act together, they might overpower the fury of sedition by refusing to comply with the ordinance for the twentieth part, and the other taxes levied for the support of the rebel army, and by uniting great numbers in a petition for peace. They proceeded with great

[21] Clar. 'Hist. of the Rebellion,' iv. 58, ed. 1826.

[22] Whitelock's 'Memorials,' p. 67 and p. 70, ed. 1732.

caution. Three only met in one place, and no man was allowed to impart the plot to more than two others; so that, if any should be suspected or seized, more than three could not be endangered.

Lord Conway joined in the design, and, Clarendon imagines, incidentally mingled, as he was a soldier, some martial hopes or projects, which however were only mentioned, the main design being to bring the loyal inhabitants to the knowledge of each other; for which purpose there was to be appointed one in every district, to distinguish the friends of the King, the adherents to the Parliament, and the neutrals. How far they proceeded does not appear; the result of their inquiry, as Pym declared,[23] was, that within the walls, for one that was for the royalists, there were three against them; but that without the walls, for one that was against them, there were five for them. Whether this was said from knowledge or guess, was perhaps never inquired.

It is the opinion of Clarendon, that in Waller's plan no violence or sanguinary resistance was comprised; that he intended only to abate the confidence of the rebels by public declarations, and to weaken their powers by an opposition to new supplies. This, in calmer times, and more than this, is done without fear; but such was the acrimony of the Commons, that no method of obstructing them was safe.

About this time another design was formed by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a man of loyalty that deserves perpetual remembrance: when he was a merchant in the City, he gave and procured the King, in his exigences, a hundred thousand pounds; and, when he was driven from the Exchange, raised a regiment, and commanded it.[24]

Sir Nicholas flattered himself with an opinion, that some provocation would so much exasperate, or some opportunity so much encourage, the King's friends in the City, that they would

[23] 'Parliamentary History,' vol. ii.—JOHNSON.

[24] He survived the Restoration, and, dying 26th Feb. 1665, aged sixty-seven, was buried in Hammersmith Church, in which he had ordered to be erected a bronze bust of Charles I., "as a grateful commemoration of that glorious martyr." The bust is still in the church.

break out in open resistance, and then would want only a lawful standard and an authorised commander; and extorted from the King, whose judgment too frequently yielded to importunity, a commission of array, directed to such as he thought proper to nominate, which was sent to London by the Lady Aubigny.[25] She knew not what she carried, but was to deliver it on the communication of a certain token which Sir Nicholas imparted.

This commission could be only intended to lie ready till the time should require it. To have attempted to raise any forces would have been certain destruction; it could be of use only when the forces should appear. This was, however, an act preparatory to martial hostility. Crispe would undoubtedly have put an end to the session of parliament, had his strength been equal to his zeal; and out of the design of Crispe, which involved very little danger, and that of Waller, which was an act purely civil, they compounded a horrid and dreadful plot.

The discovery of Waller's design is variously related. In Clarendon's 'History' it is told that a servant of Tomkyns, lurking behind the hangings when his master was in conference with Waller, heard enough to qualify him for an informer, and carried his intelligence to Pym. A manuscript, quoted in the 'Life of Waller,'[26] relates that "he was betrayed by his sister Price and her Presbyterian chaplain Mr. Goode, who stole some of his papers; and if he had not strangely dreamed the night before that his sister had betrayed him, and thereupon burnt the rest of his papers by the fire left in his chimney, he had certainly lost his life by it." The question cannot be decided. It is not unreasonable to believe that the men in power, receiving intelligence from the sister, would employ the servant of Tomkyns to listen at the conference, that they might avoid an act so offensive as that of destroying the brother by the sister's testimony.

The plot was published in the most terrific manner.

[25] Catherine Howard, then the widow of Lord Aubigny, who fell at Edge Hill. She was imprisoned for her share in Waller's plot; escaped to the Hague; married the Earl of Newburgh; and died abroad in 1649.

[26] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xxviii.

On the 31st of May, 1643, at a solemn fast, when they were listening to the sermon, a messenger entered the church,[27] and communicated his errand to Pym, who whispered it to others that were placed near him, and then went with them out of the church, leaving the rest in solicitude and amazement. They immediately sent guards to proper places, and that night apprehended Tomkyns and Waller, having yet traced nothing but that letters had been intercepted, from which it appeared that the parliament and the city were soon to be delivered into the hands of the Cavaliers.

They perhaps yet knew little themselves, beyond some general and indistinct notices. "But Waller," says Clarendon, "was so confounded with fear, that he confessed whatever he had said, heard, thought, or seen; all that he knew of himself, and all that he suspected of others, without concealing any person, of what degree or quality soever, or any discourse that he had ever upon any occasion entertained with them; what such and such ladies of great honour, to whom, upon the credit of his great wit and very good reputation, he had been admitted, had spoke to him in their chambers upon the proceedings in the Houses, and how they had encouraged him to oppose them; what correspondence and intercourse they had with some ministers of State at Oxford, and how they derived all intelligence thither."[28] He accused the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway as co-operating in the transaction, and testified that the Earl of Northumberland had declared himself disposed in favour of any attempt that might check the violence of the Parliament and reconcile them to the King.

He undoubtedly confessed much which they could never have discovered, and perhaps somewhat which they would wish to have been suppressed; for it is inconvenient, in the conflict of factions, to have that disaffection known which cannot safely be punished.

Tomkyns was seized on the same night with Waller, and appears likewise to have partaken of his cowardice; for he gave

[27] Of St. Margaret's, Westminster.

[28] Clarendon's 'History,' iv. 67, ed. 1826.

notice of Crispe's commission of array, of which Clarendon never knew how it was discovered. Tomkyns had been sent with the token appointed, to demand it from Lady Aubigny, and had buried it in his garden, where, by his direction, it was dug up; and thus the rebels obtained, what Clarendon confesses them to have had, the original copy.

It can raise no wonder that they formed one plot out of these two designs, however remote from each other, when they saw the same agent employed in both, and found the commission of array in the hands of him who was employed in collecting the opinions and affections of the people.

Of the plot, thus combined, they took care to make the most. They sent Pym among the citizens to tell them of their imminent danger and happy escape, and inform them that the design was "to seize the Lord Mayor and all the Committee of Militia, and would not spare one of them." They drew up a vow and covenant, to be taken by every member of either House, by which he declared his detestation of all conspiracies against the Parliament, and his resolution to detect and oppose them. They then appointed a day of thanksgiving for this wonderful delivery, which shut out, says Clarendon, all doubts whether there had been such a deliverance, and whether the plot was real or fictitious.

On June 11 the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway were committed, one to the custody of the mayor, and the other of the sheriff; but their lands and goods were not seized.

Waller was still to immerse himself deeper in ignominy. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway denied the charge; and there was no evidence against them but the confession of Waller, of which undoubtedly many would be inclined to question the veracity. With these doubts he was so much terrified that he endeavoured to persuade Portland to a declaration like his own, by a letter extant in Fenton's edition.[29] "But for me," says he, "you had never known anything of this business, which was by them prepared for another; and, therefore, I cannot

[29] Fenton printed it from the original, in the possession of "the Reverend Dr. Tanner, Chancellor of Norwich."

imagine why you should wed it so far as to contract your own ruin by concealing it, and persisting unreasonably to hide that truth, which, without you, already is, and will every day be made more manifest. Can you imagine yourself obliged in honour to keep that secret which is already revealed by another? or possible it should still be a secret, which is known to one of the other sex? . . . . If you persist to be cruel to yourself for others' sakes that deserve it not, it will nevertheless be made appear ere long, I fear, to your ruin. Surely, if I had the happiness to wait on you, I could move you to compassionate both yourself and me, who, desperate as my case is, am desirous to die with the honour of being known to have declared the truth. . . . . You have no reason to contend to hide what is already revealed—inconsiderately to throw away yourself for the interest of others, to whom you are less obliged than you are aware of."

This persuasion seems to have had little effect. Portland sent (June 29) a letter to the Lords, to tell them that he "is in custody, as he conceives, without any charge; and that by what Mr. Waller hath threatened him with since he was imprisoned, he doth apprehend a very cruel, long, and ruinous restraint:—He therefore prays that he may not find the effects of Mr. Waller's threats by a long and close imprisonment, but may be speedily brought to a legal trial, and then he is confident the vanity and falsehood of those informations which have been given against him will appear."

In consequence of this letter, the Lords ordered Portland and Waller to be confronted; when the one repeated his charge and the other his denial. The examination of the plot being continued (July 1), Thinn, usher of the House of Lords, deposed that Mr. Waller having had a conference with the Lord Portland in an upper room, Lord Portland said, when he came down, "Do me the favour to tell my Lord Northumberland that Mr. Waller has extremely pressed me to save my own life and his, by throwing the blame upon the Lord Conway and the Earl of Northumberland."

Waller, in his letter to Portland, tells him of the reasons

which he could urge with resistless efficacy in a personal conference; but he over-rated his own oratory: his vehemence, whether of persuasion or entreaty, was returned with contempt.

One of his arguments with Portland is, that the plot is already known to a woman. This woman was doubtless Lady Aubigny, who, upon this occasion, was committed to custody; but who in reality, when she delivered the commission, knew not what it was.

The Parliament then proceeded against the conspirators, and committed their trial to a council of war. Tomkyns and Chaloner were hanged near their own doors. Tomkyns, when he came to die, said it was a *foolish business;* and indeed there seems to have been no hope that it should escape discovery; for though never more than three met at a time, yet a design so extensive must, by necessity, be communicated to many, who could not be expected to be all faithful, and all prudent. Chaloner was attended at his execution by Hugh Peters. His crime was, that he had commission to raise money for the King; but it appears not that the money was to be expended upon the advancement of either Crispe or Waller's plot.

The Earl of Northumberland, being too great for prosecution, was only once examined before the Lords. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway persisting to deny the charge, and no testimony but Waller's yet appearing against them, were, after a long imprisonment, admitted to bail. Hassel, the King's messenger, who carried the letters to Oxford, died the night before his trial. Hampden[30] escaped death, perhaps by the interest of his family, but was kept in prison to the end of his life. They whose names were inserted in the commission of array were not capitally punished, as it could not be proved that they had consented to their own nomination; but they were considered as malignants, and their estates were seized.

"Waller, though confessedly," says Clarendon, "the most guilty, with incredible dissimulation acted such a remorse of conscience, that his trial was put off, out of Christian compassion,

[30] Alexander Hampden, a kinsman of John Hampden.

till he might recover his understanding." What use he made of this interval, with what liberality and success he distributed flattery and money, and how, when he was brought (July 4, 1643) before the House, he confessed and lamented, and submitted and implored, may be read in the 'History of the Rebellion' (B. vii.). The speech, to which Clarendon ascribes the preservation of his *dear-bought life*, is inserted in his works. The great historian, however, seems to have been mistaken in relating that *he prevailed* in the principal part of his supplication, *not to be tried by a council of war;* for, according to Whitelock,[31] he was, by expulsion from the House, abandoned to the tribunal which he so much dreaded, and, being tried and condemned, was reprieved by Essex;[32] but after a year's imprison-

[31] Whitelock, p. 70, ed. 1732.

[32] Much of this is confirmed and illustrated by the following letter in behalf of his life, addressed

To Arthur Goodwyn, of Upper Winchendon, in Bucks.

Sir,—If you will be pleased to remember what your poor neighbour hath been, or did know what his heart now is, you might perhaps be inclined to contribute something to his preservation. I heard of your late being in town, but am so closely confined that I know not how to present my humble service to you. Alas! Sir, what should I say for myself? Unless your own good nature and proneness to compassion incline you towards me, I can use no argument, having deserved so ill. And yet 'tis possible you may remember I have heretofore done something better, when God blest me so as to take you and my dear cousin * (your late friend, now with God) for my example. Sir, as you succeed him in the general hopes of your country, so do you likewise in my particular hope. I know you would not willingly have let that fall out which he (if alive) would have wished otherwise. Be not offended (I beseech you) if I put you in mind what you were pleased to say to your servant when the life of that worthy person was in danger in a noble cause as any is now in the country. You asked me then if I were content my kinsman's blood should be spilt; and truly I think you found not by my words only, but my actions also, my earnest desire to preserve and defend him, having had the honour to be employed among those who persuaded the shreeves with the trained-bands to protect him, and the rest in the same danger, to the House. As then you were pleased to remember I was of his blood, so I beseech you forget it not now; and then I shall have some hopes of your favour. Sir, my first request is, that you will be nobly pleased to use your interest with Dr. Dorislaus to show me what lawful favour he may in the trial; and if I am forfeited to justice, that you will please to incline my Lord-General [Essex] to grant me his pardon. Your interest, both with his Excellence and in the House, is very

* His dear cousin was the celebrated Hampden.

ment, in which time resentment grew less acrimonious, paying a fine of ten thousand pounds, he was permitted to *recollect himself in another country*.[33]

Of his behaviour in this part of his life, it is not necessary to direct the reader's opinion. "Let us not," says his last ingenious biographer, "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which the world hath seldom seen, because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero."

For the place of his exile he chose France, and stayed some time at Rouen, where his daughter Margaret was born, who was afterwards his favourite, and his amanuensis. He then removed to Paris, where he lived with great splendour and hospitality; and from time to time amused himself with poetry, in which he sometimes speaks of the rebels, and their usurpation, in the natural language of an honest man.

At last it became necessary, for his support, to sell his wife's jewels; and being reduced, as he said, at last *to the rump-jewel*, he solicited from Cromwell permission to return,[34] and obtained it by the interest of Colonel Scroop, to whom his sister was married. Upon the remains of a fortune which the danger of his life had very much diminished, he lived at Hall Barn, a house built by himself, very near to Beaconsfield, where his mother resided.[35]

great; but I will not direct your wisdom which way to favour me; only give me leave to assure you that (God with his grace assisting the resolution he has given me) you shall never have cause to repent the saving a life which I shall make haste to render you again in the cause you maintain, and express myself, during all the life you shall lengthen,

Sir, your most humble, faithful, and
obedient Servant,

EDMUND WALLER.

—NUGENT'S *Hampden*, ii. 419.

[33] Clar. 'Hist.' iv. 79, ed. 1826.

[34] Paris, 13th Jan., 1652.—I took leave of Mr. Waller, who, having been proscribed by the rebels, had obtained of them permission to return, was going to England.—EVELYN (who was with him at Venice in 1646, and Paris in 1649.)

[35] Mr. Waller had Sacharissa's picture at his seat at Hall Barn, which he built about a quarter of a mile from Beaconsfield, his mother living in that town. That seat has been since rebuilt by Dr. Stephen Waller, his son, and is now a very handsome edifice.—*Life, prefixed to Poems*, 8vo. 1711, p. xvii.

His mother, though related to Cromwell and Hampden, was zealous for the royal cause, and, when Cromwell visited her, used to reproach him: he in return would throw a napkin at her, and say he would not dispute with his aunt [cousin?]; but finding in time that she acted for the King, as well as talked, he made her a prisoner to her own daughter, in her own house. If he would do anything, he could not do less.

Cromwell, now Protector, received Waller, as his kinsman, to a familiar conversation. Waller, as he used to relate, found him sufficiently versed in ancient history; and when any of his enthusiastic friends came to advise or consult him, could sometimes overhear him discoursing in the cant of the times; but when he returned, he would say, "Cousin Waller, I must talk to these men in their own way;" and resumed the common style of conversation.[36]

He repaid the Protector for his favours (1655) by the famous Panegyric,[37] which has been always considered as the first of his poetical productions. His choice of encomiastic topics is very judicious; for he considers Cromwell in his exaltation, without inquiring how he attained it; there is consequently no mention of the rebel or the regicide. All the former part of his hero's life is veiled with shades; and nothing is brought to view but the chief, the governor, the defender of England's honour, and the enlarger of her dominion. The act of violence by which he obtained the supreme power is lightly treated, and decently justified. It was certainly to be desired that the detestable band should be dissolved which had destroyed the Church, murdered the King, and filled the nation with tumult and oppression; yet Cromwell had not the right of dissolving them, for all that he had before done could be justified only by supposing them invested with lawful authority. But combinations of wickedness would overwhelm the world by the advantage which licentious

[36] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711.

[37] A Panegyrick to my Lord Protector of the Present Greatness and Joynt Interest of his Highness and this Nation. By E. W., Esq. London: Printed for Richard Lowndes, &c. 1655. 4to. Waller did not include it in any edition of his poems.

principles afford, did not those who have long practised perfidy grow faithless to each other.

In the poem on the war with Spain are some passages at least equal to the best parts of the Panegyric; and in the conclusion the poet ventures yet a higher flight of flattery, by recommending royalty to Cromwell and the nation. Cromwell was very desirous, as appears from his conversation, related by Whitelock, of adding the title to the power of monarchy, and is supposed to have been withheld from it partly by fear of the army, and partly by fear of the laws, which, when he should govern by the name of King, would have restrained his authority. When therefore a deputation was solemnly sent to invite him to the Crown, he, after a long conference, refused it, but is said to have fainted in his coach when he parted from them.

The poem on the death of the Protector seems to have been dictated by real veneration for his memory. Dryden and Sprat wrote on the same occasion; but they were young men, struggling into notice, and hoping for some favour from the ruling party. Waller had little to expect: he had received nothing but his pardon from Cromwell, and was not likely to ask anything from those who should succeed him.

Soon afterwards the Restoration supplied him with another subject; and he exerted his imagination, his elegance, and his melody, with equal alacrity, for Charles the Second. It is not possible to read, without some contempt and indignation, poems of the same author, ascribing the highest degree of *power and piety* to Charles the First, then transferring the same *power and piety* to Oliver Cromwell, now inviting Oliver to take the Crown, and then congratulating Charles the Second on his recovered right. Neither Cromwell nor Charles could value his testimony as the effect of conviction, or receive his praises as effusions of reverence; they could consider them but as the labour of invention, the tribute of dependence.

Poets, indeed, profess fiction; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt,

must be scorned as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue.

The 'Congratulation' was considered as inferior in poetical merit to the 'Panegyric;' and it is reported that when the King told Waller of the disparity, he answered, "Poets, Sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth." [38]

The 'Congratulation' is indeed not inferior to the 'Panegyric,' either by decay of genius or for want of diligence; but, because Cromwell had done much, and Charles had done little, Cromwell wanted nothing to raise him to heroic excellence but virtue, and virtue his poet thought himself at liberty to supply. Charles had yet only the merit of struggling without success, and suffering without despair. A life of escapes and indigence could supply poetry with no splendid images.

In the first parliament summoned by Charles the Second (May 8, 1661), Waller sat for Hastings in Sussex, and served for different places in all the parliaments of that reign. In a time when fancy and gaiety were the most powerful recommendations to regard, it is not likely that Waller was forgotten. He passed his time in the company that was highest, both in rank and wit, from which even his obstinate sobriety did not exclude him. Though he drank water, he was enabled by his fertility of mind to heighten the mirth of bacchanalian assemblies; and Mr. Saville said, that "no man in England should keep him company without drinking but Ned Waller." [39]

The praise given him by St. Evremond is a proof of his reputation; for it was only by his reputation that he could be known, as a writer, to a man who, though he lived a great part of a long life upon an English pension, never condescended to understand the language of the nation that maintained him.

In the parliament, "he was," says Burnet, "the delight of the house, and, though old, said the liveliest things of any among them." This, however, is said in his account of the year '75, when Waller was only seventy. His name as a speaker occurs often in Grey's 'Collections;' but I have found

[38] Told in the 'Menagiana.'

[39] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xlvii.

no extracts that can be more quoted as exhibiting sallies of gaiety than cogency of argument.

He was of such consideration, that his remarks were circulated and recorded. When the Duke of York's influence was high, both in Scotland and England, it drew, says Burnet, a lively reflection from Waller the celebrated wit. "He said, the House of Commons had resolved that the Duke should not reign after the King's death; but the King, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign even in his life."[40] If there appear no extraordinary *liveliness* in this *remark*, yet its reception proves the speaker to have been a *celebrated wit*, to have had a name which men of wit were proud of mentioning.[41]

He did not suffer his reputation to die gradually away, which may easily happen in a long life, but renewed his claim to poetical distinction from time to time, as occasions were offered, either by public events or private incidents; and, contenting himself with the influence of his muse, or loving quiet better than influence, he never accepted any office of magistracy.

He was not, however, without some attention to his fortune; for he asked from the King (in 1665) the provostship of Eton College, and obtained it; but Clarendon refused to put the seal to the grant, alleging that it could be held only by a clergyman. It is known that Sir Henry Wotton qualified himself for it by deacon's orders.

To this opposition the 'Biographia'[42] imputes the violence and acrimony with which Waller joined Buckingham's faction in the prosecution of Clarendon. The motive was illiberal and dishonest, and showed that more than sixty years had not been able to teach him morality. His accusation is such as conscience

[40] Burnet's 'Own Times,' ed. 1823, ii. 416.

[41] It is said by Rymer, in his poem on Waller's death, that "It was no House if Waller was not there."

A motion being made in the House of Commons, that such as were chosen to serve in the Parliament troopes should be faithfull and skillfull riders, Mr. Waller's opinion was demanded, who approved the forme of it as excellent; "for," sayes he, "it is most necessary the riders be faithful least they runne away with their horses, and skillfull least their horses runne away with them." —L'Estrange's *Anecdotes* (*Anecdotes and Traditions by* Thoms, p. 60.)

[42] 'Biographia Britannica,' vi. 411, fol. 1766.

can hardly be supposed to dictate without the help of malice. "We were to be governed by janizaries instead of parliaments, and are in danger from a worse plot than that of the 5th of November: then, if the Lords and Commons had been destroyed, there had been a succession; but here both had been destroyed for ever." This is the language of a man who is glad of an opportunity to rail, and ready to sacrifice truth to interest at one time and to anger at another.

A year after the Chancellor's banishment, another vacancy gave him encouragement for another petition, which the King referred to the council, who, after hearing the question argued by lawyers for three days, determined that the office could be held only by a clergyman, according to the Act of Uniformity, since the provosts had always received institution, as for a parsonage, from the bishops of Lincoln. The King then said he could not break the law which he had made; and Dr. Zachary Cradock, famous for a single sermon—at most for two sermons—was chosen by the fellows.

That he asked anything more is not known: it is certain that he obtained nothing, though he continued obsequious to the Court through the rest of Charles's reign.

At the accession of King James, in 1685, he was chosen for Parliament, being then fourscore, at Saltash, in Cornwall; and wrote a 'Presage of the Downfall of the Turkish Empire,' which he presented to the King on his birthday. It is remarked by his commentator Fenton, that in reading Tasso he had early imbibed a veneration for the heroes of the Holy War, and a zealous enmity to the Turks, which never left him. James, however, having soon after begun what he thought a Holy War at home, made haste to put all molestation of the Turks out of his power.

James treated him with kindness and familiarity, of which instances are given by the writer of his life. One day, taking him into the closet, the King asked him how he liked one of the pictures: "My eyes," said Waller, "are dim, and I do not know it." The King said it was the Princess of Orange. "She is," said Waller, "like the greatest woman in the world."

The King asked who was that; and was answered, "Queen Elizabeth." "I wonder," said the King, "you should think so; but I must confess she had a wise council." "And, Sir," said Waller, "did you ever know a fool choose a wise one?" [43] Such is the story, which I once heard of some other man. Pointed axioms and acute replies fly loose about the world, and are assigned successively to those whom it may be the fashion to celebrate.

When the King knew that he was about to marry his daughter to Dr. Birch, a clergyman, he ordered a French gentleman to tell him that "the King wondered he could think of marrying his daughter to a falling Church." "The King," says Waller, "does me great honour in taking notice of my domestic affairs; but I have lived long enough to observe that this falling Church has got a trick of rising again." [44]

He took notice to his friends of the King's conduct, and said that "he would be left like a whale upon the strand." Whether he was privy to any of the transactions which ended in the Revolution, is not known. His heir joined the Prince of Orange.

Having now attained an age beyond which the laws of nature seldom suffer life to be extended, otherwise than by a future state, he seems to have turned his mind upon preparation for the decisive hour, and therefore consecrated his poetry to devotion. It is pleasing to discover that his piety was without weakness; that his intellectual powers continued vigorous; and that the lines which he composed when *he, for age, could neither read nor write*, are not inferior to the effusions of his youth.[45]

[43] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo., 1711, p. lii.

[44] Ibid., p. liii.

[45] It is, I confess, but seldom seen, that the poet dies before the man; for when we once fall in love with that bewitching art, we do not use to court it as a mistress, but marry it as a wife, and take it for better or worse, as an inseparable companion of our whole life.—Cowley: *Preface to* 1656 *ed.*

I would advise no man to attempt poetry—I mean the writing of verses—except he cannot help it; and if he cannot, it is in vain to dissuade him from it. This genius is perceived so soon, even in our childhood, and increases so strongly in our youth, that he who has it never will be brought from it, do what you will. Cowley felt it at ten years, and Waller could not get rid of it at sixty.—Prior: *MSS. quoted in Malone's Life of Dryden*, p. 545.

Towards the decline of life he bought a small house with a little land at Coleshill, and said "he should be glad to die, like the stag, where he was roused." This, however, did not happen. When he was at Beaconsfield, he found his legs grow tumid: he went to Windsor, where Sir Charles Scarborough then attended the King, and requested him, as both a friend and physician, to tell him *what that swelling meant*. "Sir," answered Scarborough, "your blood will run no longer." Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, and went home to die.

As the disease increased upon him, he composed himself for his departure; and calling upon Dr. Birch to give him the holy sacrament, he desired his children to take it with him, and made an earnest declaration of his faith in Christianity. It now appeared what part of his conversation with the great could be remembered with delight. He related, that being present when the Duke of Buckingham talked profanely before King Charles, he said to him, "My Lord, I am a great deal older than your Grace, and have, I believe, heard more arguments for atheism than ever your Grace did; but I have lived long enough to see there is nothing in them, and so, I hope, your Grace will."

He died October 21, 1687, and was buried at Beaconsfield, with a monument erected by his son's executors, for which Rymer wrote the inscription, and which I hope is now rescued from dilapidation.[46]

He left several children by his second wife; of whom his daughter [Mary] was married to Dr. [Peter] Birch.[47] Benjamin,

[46] He is somewhat above a middle stature, thin body, not at all robust: fine thin skin, his face somewhat of an olivaster; his hair frized, of a brownish colour; full eye, popping out and working; oval-faced; his forehead high and full of wrinkles. His head but small, brain very hot, and apt to be choleric. . . He has but a tender, weak body, but was always very temperate. . . . He writes a lamentable hand, as bad as the scratching of a hen.—AUBREY: *Lives*.

He sat to Riley. In Dryden's 'Miscellaneous Poems' is a copy of verses by Rymer, 'To Mr. Riley, drawing Mr. Waller's picture.' The best portrait of Waller is that already mentioned at Rousham.

[47] Mary Waller was the first wife of Peter Birch, D.D., of Westminster, and Vicar of St. Bride's, Fleet Street. He survived a second wife, and dying 1710, was buried in Westminster Abbey. A characteristic anecdote of him and the burial of his second wife appears in a letter from Atterbury to Bishop Trelawny, dated 1st June, 1703:—"Dr. Birch buried his wife on Fri-

the eldest son, was disinherited, and sent to New Jersey, as wanting common understanding.[48] Edmund, the second son, inherited the estate, and represented Agmondesham in parliament, but at last turned Quaker.[49] William, the third son, was a merchant in London. Stephen, the fourth, was an eminent doctor of laws, and one of the commissioners for the Union.[50] There is said[51] to have been a fifth, of whom no account has descended.

The character of Waller, both moral and intellectual, has been drawn by Clarendon, to whom he was familiarly known, with nicety, which certainly none to whom he was not known can presume to emulate. It is therefore inserted here, with such remarks as others have supplied, after which nothing remains but a critical examination of his poetry.

"Edmund Waller," says Clarendon, "was born to a very fair estate, by the parsimony, or frugality, of a wise father and mother; and he thought it so commendable an advantage, that he resolved to improve it with his utmost care, upon which in his nature he was too much intent; and, in order to that, he was so much reserved and retired, that he was scarce ever heard of, till by his address and dexterity he had gotten a very rich wife in the city, against all the recommendation and countenance and authority of the Court, which was thoroughly engaged on

day night last; your lordship may judge with how little concern, when I tell you that on the evening before, while his wife lay dead, he went to my Lord Fitzharding's, and there married Mr. Chetwynd to my lord's daughter; after Dr. Smalridge had been applied to and had refused to do it, it being an uncanonical hour and place, and there being no extraordinary dispensation to warrant him. Dr. Birch overleaped all these formalities for the sake of five or ten guineas, which helped to bear the charges next day of his wife's interment."

[48] In his will he commands and commits the care of Benjamin to Margaret, his favourite daughter and amanuensis. He had also a daughter, Dorothy, "a dwarf, who was sent into the north of England."—'Life,' 1711, p. lviii. In 1773 Johnson and Boswell found the poet's great-grandson studying at Aberdeen.

[49] He died in 1699, without issue, and left the estate to the son of his brother Stephen.

[50] He was his father's executor; and the poet in his will leaves his dwelling-house in St. James's Street to this son.

[51] Inscription on monument.

the behalf of Mr. Crofts, and which used to be successful, in that age, against any opposition. He had the good fortune to have an alliance and friendship with Dr. Morley, who had assisted and instructed him in the reading many good books, to which his natural parts and promptitude inclined him, especially the poets; and at the age when other men used to give over writing verses (for he was near thirty years of age when he first engaged himself in that exercise, at least that he was known to do so), he surprised the town with two or three pieces of that kind, as if a tenth muse had been newly born to cherish drooping poetry. The Doctor at that time brought him into that company which was most celebrated for good conversation, where he was received and esteemed with great applause and respect. He was a very pleasant discourser in earnest and in jest, and therefore very grateful to all kind of company, where he was not the less esteemed for being very rich.

"He had been even nursed in parliaments, where he sat when he was very young; and so, when they were resumed again (after a long intermission), he appeared in those assemblies with great advantage, having a graceful way of speaking, and by thinking much upon several arguments (which his temper and complexion, that had much of melancholic, inclined him to), he seemed often to speak upon the sudden, when the occasion had only administered the opportunity of saying what he had thoroughly considered, which gave a great lustre to all he said; which yet was rather of delight than weight. There needs no more be said to extol the excellence and power of his wit, and pleasantness of his conversation, than that it was of magnitude enough to cover a world of very great faults; that is, so to cover them, that they were not taken notice of to his reproach; viz. a narrowness in his nature to the lowest degree; an abjectness and want of courage to support him in any virtuous undertaking; an insinuation and servile flattery to the height the vainest and most imperious nature could be contented with; that it preserved and won his life from those who were most resolved to take it, and in an occasion in which he ought to have been ambitious to have lost it; and then preserved him

again from the reproach and contempt that was due to him for so preserving it, and for vindicating it at such a price that it had power to reconcile him to those whom he had most offended and provoked; and continued to his age with that rare felicity, that his company was acceptable where his spirit was odious; and he was at least pitied where he was most detested." [52]

Such is the account of Clarendon; on which it may not be improper to make some remarks.

"He was very little known till he had obtained a rich wife in the city."

He obtained a rich wife about the age of three-and-twenty; an age before which few men are conspicuous much to their advantage. He was known, however, in parliament and at court; and, if he spent part of his time in privacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he endeavoured the improvement of his mind as well as of his fortune.

That Clarendon might misjudge the motive of his retirement is the more probable, because he has evidently mistaken the commencement of his poetry, which he supposes him not to have attempted before thirty. As his first pieces were perhaps not printed, the succession of his compositions was not known; and Clarendon, who cannot be imagined to have been very studious of poetry, did not rectify his first opinion by consulting Waller's book.

Clarendon observes, that he was introduced to the wits of the age by Dr. Morley;[53] but the writer of his life [54] relates that he was already among them, when, hearing a noise in the street, and inquiring the cause, they found *a son* of Ben Jonson [55] under an arrest. This was Morley, whom Waller set free at the expense of one hundred pounds, took him into the country as director of his studies, and then procured him admission into

[52] Clarendon's 'Life,' i. 53, ed. 1827.

[53] Ibid., p. 54.

[54] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xi.

[55] He [Waller] told me he was not acquainted with Ben Jonson (who dyed about 1638), but familiarly with Lucius Lord Falkland, Sydney Godolphin, Mr. Hobbes, &c.—AUBREY'S *Lives*, iii. 564.

the company of the friends of literature. Of this fact Clarendon had a nearer knowledge than the biographer, and is therefore more to be credited.

The account of Waller's parliamentary eloquence is seconded by Burnet, who, though he calls him "the delight of the House," adds, that "he was only concerned to say that which should make him be applauded; he never laid the business of the House to heart, being a vain and empty though a witty man." [56]

Of his insinuation and flattery it is not unreasonable to believe that the truth is told. Ascham, in his elegant description of those whom in modern language we term Wits, says, that they are *open flatterers, and privy mockers.* Waller showed a little of both, when, upon sight of the Duchess of Newcastle's verses on the Death of a Stag, he declared that he would give all his own compositions to have written them; and being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered, that "nothing was too much to be given, that a lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance." [57] This, however, was no very mischievous or very unusual deviation from truth: had his hypocrisy been confined to such transactions, he might have been forgiven, though not praised; for who forbears to flatter an author or a lady?

Of the laxity of his political principles, and the weakness of his resolution, he experienced the natural effect, by losing the esteem of every party. From Cromwell he had only his recall; and from Charles the Second, who delighted in his company, he obtained only the pardon of his relation Hampden, and the safety of Hampden's son.

As far as conjecture can be made from the whole of his writing, and his conduct, he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. His deviation towards democracy proceeded from his connection with Hampden, for whose sake he prosecuted Crawley with great bitterness; and the invective which he pronounced on that occasion was so popular, that

[56] Burnet's 'Own Times,' ii. 81, ed. 1823.

[57] Told on the authority of Mrs. Phillips.—*Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus*, 8vo. 1705, p. 206.

twenty thousand copies are said by his biographer to have been sold in one day.[58]

It is confessed that his faults still left him many friends, at least many companions. His convivial power of pleasing is universally acknowledged; but those who conversed with him intimately, found him not only passionate, especially in his old age, but resentful; so that the interposition of friends was sometimes necessary.

His wit and his poetry naturally connected him with the polite writers of his time: he was joined with Lord Buckhurst in the translation of Corneille's 'Pompey;' and is said to have added his help to that of Cowley in the original draught of the 'Rehearsal.'

The care of his fortune, which Clarendon imputes to him in a degree little less than criminal, was either not constant or not successful; for, having inherited a patrimony of three thousand five hundred pounds a-year in the time of James the First, and augmented at least by one wealthy marriage, he left, about the time of the Revolution, an income of not more than twelve or thirteen hundred, which, when the different value of money is reckoned, will be found perhaps not more than a fourth part of what he once possessed.

Of this diminution, part was the consequence of the gifts which he was forced to scatter, and the fine which he was condemned to pay, at the detection of his plot; and if his estate, as is related in his Life, was sequestered, he had probably contracted debts when he lived in exile; for we are told,[59] that at Paris he lived in splendour, and was the only Englishman, except the Lord St. Alban's, that kept a table.

His unlucky plot compelled him to sell a thousand a year;[60]

[58] 'Life,' prefixed to Poems, 8vo. 1711, p. xxi.

[59] Ibid., p. xl.

[60] It is said in one of R. Symonds's 'Pocket Books' (Harl. MS. 991) that Waller's estate was in Charles I.'s time 2000*l.* a-year (not 3500*l.*), and that he sold 500*l.* or 600*l.* a-year of it to save his life. Symonds was a curious inquirer, with good opportunities. This statement is, I suspect, nearer the truth than the account of his fortune by his chief biographer. "Waller," says Mrs. Hutchinson, "for being more a knave than the rest, and peaching his complices, was permitted to buy his life for 10,000*l.*" "His

of the waste of the rest there is no account, except that he is confessed by his biographer to have been a bad economist. He seems to have deviated from the common practice; to have been a hoarder in his first years, and a squanderer in his last.

Of his course of studies, or choice of books, nothing is known more than that he professed himself unable to read Chapman's translation of Homer without rapture. His opinion concerning the duty of a poet is contained in his declaration, that "he would blot from his works any line that did not contain some motive to virtue."[61]

The characters by which Waller intended to distinguish his writing, are sprightliness and dignity; in his smaller pieces, he endeavours to be gay; in the larger, to be great. Of his airy and light productions, the chief source is gallantry, that attentive reverence of female excellence which has descended to us from the Gothic ages. As his poems are commonly occasional, and his addresses personal, he was not so liberally supplied with grand as with soft images; for beauty is more easily found than magnanimity.

The delicacy which he cultivated restrains him to a certain nicety and caution, even when he writes upon the slightest matter. He has, therefore, in his whole volume nothing burlesque, and seldom anything ludicrous or familiar. He seems always to do his best; though his subjects are often unworthy

"His paternal estate, and by his first wife," says Aubrey, "was 3000*l.* per annum." The same authority adds (and he knew Waller) that, in order to save his life, he sold his estate in Bedfordshire, about 1300*l.* per annum, to Dr. Wright, M.D., for 10,000*l.* (much under value), which was procured in twenty-four hours' time, or else he had been hanged.

[61] And this was the principle, too, of our excellent Mr. Waller, who used to say that he would raze any line out of his poems which did not imply some motive to virtue. But he was unhappy in the choice of the subject of his admirable vein in poetry: the Countess of Carlisle was the Helen of her country.—CHETWOOD'S *Life of Virgil, prefixed to Dryden's Virgil.*

The Earl of Mulgrave and Mr. Waller, two of the best judges of our age, have assured me that they never could read over the translation of Chapman without incredible pleasure and extreme transport. This admiration of theirs must needs proceed from the author himself; for the translator has thrown him down as low as harsh numbers, improper English, and a monstrous length of verse could carry him.—DRYDEN: *Prose Works*, iv. 288.

of his care. It is not easy to think without some contempt on an author who is growing illustrious in his own opinion by verses, at one time, 'To a Lady, who can do anything, but sleep, when she pleases;' at another, 'To a Lady who can sleep when she pleases;' now, 'To a Lady, on her passing through a crowd of people;' then, 'On a braid of divers colours woven by four Ladies;' 'On a tree cut in paper;' or, 'To a Lady, from whom he received the copy of verses on the paper-tree, which, for many years, had been missing.'

Genius now and then produces a lucky trifle. We still read the 'Dove' of Anacreon, and 'Sparrow' of Catullus; and a writer naturally pleases himself with a performance which owes nothing to the subject. But compositions merely pretty have the fate of other pretty things, and are quitted in time for something useful; they are flowers fragrant and fair, but of short duration; or they are blossoms to be valued only as they foretell fruits.

Among Waller's little poems are some which their excellency ought to secure from oblivion; as, 'To Amoret,' comparing the different modes of regard with which he looks on her and Sacharissa; and the verses 'On Love,' that begin—Anger in hasty words or blows.

In others he is not equally successful; sometimes his thoughts are deficient, and sometimes his expression.

The numbers are not always musical; as,

> "Fair Venus, in thy soft arms
> The god of rage confine;
> For thy whispers are the charms
> Which only can divert his fierce design.
> What though he frown, and to tumult do incline?
> Thou the flame
> Kindled in his breast canst tame
> With that snow which unmelted lies on thine."

He seldom indeed fetches an amorous sentiment from the depths of science; his thoughts are for the most part easily understood, and his images such as the superficies of nature readily supplies; he has a just claim to popularity, because he

writes to common degrees of knowledge; and is free at least from philosophical pedantry, unless perhaps the end of a song 'To the Sun' may be excepted, in which he is too much a Copernican. To which may be added the simile of the Palm in the verses 'On her passing through a crowd;' and a line in a more serious poem on the Restoration, about vipers and treacle, which can only be understood by those who happen to know the composition of the 'Theriaca.'

His thoughts are sometimes hyperbolical, and his images unnatural:

"—— The plants admire,
No less than those of old did Orpheus' lyre;
If she sit down, with tops all tow'rds her bow'd;
They round about her into arbours crowd:
Or if she walks, in even ranks they stand,
Like some well-marshall'd and obsequious band."

In another place:

"While in the park I sing, the listening deer
Attend my passion, and forget to fear:
When to the beeches I report my flame,
They bow their heads, as if they felt the same.
To gods appealing, when I reach their bowers,
With loud complaints they answer me in showers.
To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,
More deaf than trees, and prouder than the heaven!"

On the head of a stag:

"O fertile head! which every year
Could such a crop of wonder bear!
The teeming earth did never bring
So soon, so hard, so huge a thing:
Which might it never have been cast,
Each year's growth added to the last,
These lofty branches had supplied
The Earth's bold sons prodigious pride;
Heaven with these engines had been scal'd
When mountains heap'd on mountains fail'd."

Sometimes, having succeeded in the first part, he makes a feeble conclusion. In the song of 'Sacharissa's and Amoret's Friendship,' the two last stanzas ought to have been omitted.

His images of gallantry are not always in the highest degree delicate :

" Then shall my love this doubt displace,
And gain such trust that I may come
And banquet sometimes on thy face,
But make my constant meals at home."

Some applications may be thought too remote and unconsequential, as in the verses on the ' Lady Dancing :'

" The sun in figures such as these
Joys with the moon to play :
To the sweet strains they advance,
Which do result from their own spheres ;
As this nymph's dance
Moves with the numbers which she hears."

Sometimes a thought, which might perhaps fill a distich, is expanded and attenuated till it grows weak and almost evanescent :

" Chloris ! since first our calm of peace
Was frighted hence, this good we find,
Your favours with your fears increase,
And growing mischiefs make you kind.
So the fair tree, which still preserves
Her fruit and state while no wind blows,
In storms from that uprightness swerves ;
And the glad earth about her strows
With treasure from her yielding boughs."

His images are not always distinct ; as, in the following passage, he confounds *Love* as a person with *love* as a passion :

" Some other nymphs, with colours faint,
And pencil slow, may Cupid paint,
And a weak heart in time destroy ;
She has a stamp and prints the Boy :
Can, with a single look, inflame
The coldest breast, the rudest tame."

His sallies of casual flattery are sometimes elegant and happy, as that ' In return for the Silver Pen ;' and sometimes empty and trifling, as that ' Upon the Card torn by the Queen.' There are a few lines ' Written in the Duchess's Tasso,' which he is said by Fenton to have kept a summer under correction. It

happened to Waller, as to others, that his success was not always in proportion to his labour.

Of these petty compositions, neither the beauties nor the faults deserve much attention. The amorous verses have this to recommend them, that they are less hyperbolical than those of some other poets. Waller is not always at the last gasp; he does not die of a frown, nor live upon a smile. There is, however, too much love, and too many trifles. Little things are made too important; and the Empire of Beauty is represented as exerting its influence further than can be allowed by the multiplicity of human passions, and the variety of human wants. Such books, therefore, may be considered as showing the world under a false appearance, and, so far as they obtain credit from the young and unexperienced, as misleading expectation, and misguiding practice.

Of his nobler and more weighty performances, the greater part is panegyrical; for of praise he was very lavish, as is observed by his imitator, Lord Lansdowne:

> "No satyr stalks within the hallow'd ground,
> But queens and heroines, kings and gods abound;
> Glory and arms and love are all the sound."

In the first poem, on the danger of the Prince on the coast of Spain, there is a puerile and ridiculous mention of Arion at the beginning; and the last paragraph, on the Cable, is in part ridiculously mean, and in part ridiculously tumid. The poem, however, is such as may be justly praised, without much allowance for the state of our poetry and language at that time.

The two next poems are upon 'The King's behaviour at the death of Buckingham,' and upon his 'Navy.'

He has, in the first, used the Pagan deities with great propriety:

> "'Twas want of such a precedent as this
> Made the old Heathen frame their gods amiss."

In the poem on 'The Navy,' those lines are very noble which suppose the King's power secure against a second deluge; so

noble, that it were almost criminal to remark the mistake of *centre* for *surface*, or to say that the empire of the sea would be worth little if it were not that the waters terminate in land.

The poem upon Sallee has forcible sentiments; but the conclusion is feeble. That on the Repairs of St. Paul's has something vulgar and obvious; such as the mention of Amphion; and something violent and harsh, as:

> "So all our minds with his conspire to grace
> The Gentiles' great apostle, and deface
> Those state-obscuring sheds, that like a chain
> Seem'd to confine, and fetter him again:
> Which the glad saint shakes off at his command,
> As once the viper from his sacred hand.
> So joys the aged oak when we divide
> The creeping ivy from his injur'd side."

Of the two last couplets, the first is extravagant, and the second mean.

His praise of the Queen is too much exaggerated; and the thought, that she "saves lovers by cutting off hope, as gangrenes are cured by lopping the limb," presents nothing to the mind but disgust and horror.

Of the 'Battle of the Summer Islands,' it seems not easy to say whether it is intended to raise terror or merriment. The beginning is too splendid for jest, and the conclusion too light for seriousness. The versification is studied, the scenes are diligently displayed, and the images artfully amplified; but as it ends neither in joy nor sorrow, it will scarcely be read a second time.

The 'Panegyric' upon Cromwell has obtained from the public a very liberal dividend of praise, which however cannot be said to have been unjustly lavished; for such a series of verses had rarely appeared before in the English language. Of the lines, some are grand, some are graceful, and all are musical. There is now and then a feeble verse, or a trifling thought; but its great fault is the choice of its hero.

The poem of 'The War with Spain' begins with lines more vigorous and striking than Waller is accustomed to produce.

The succeeding parts are variegated with better passages and worse. There is something too farfetched in the comparison of the Spaniards drawing the English on, by saluting St. Lucar with cannon, *to lambs awakening the lion by bleating.* The fate of the Marquis and his Lady, who were burnt in their ship, would have moved more had the poet not made him die like the phœnix, because he had spices about him, nor expressed their affection and their end by a conceit at once false and vulgar:

> "Alive, in flames of equal love they burn'd,
> And now together are to ashes turn'd."

The verses to Charles on his return were doubtless intended to counterbalance the panegyric on Cromwell. If it has been thought inferior to that with which it is naturally compared, the cause of its deficience has been already remarked.

The remaining pieces it is not necessary to examine singly. They must be supposed to have faults and beauties of the same kind with the rest. The Sacred Poems, however, deserve particular regard; they were the work of Waller's declining life—of those hours in which he looked upon the fame and the folly of the time past with the sentiments which his great predecessor Petrarch bequeathed to posterity upon his review of that love and poetry which have given him immortality.

That natural jealousy which makes every man unwilling to allow much excellence in another always produces a disposition to believe that the mind grows old with the body, and that he whom we are now forced to confess superior is hastening daily to a level with ourselves. By delighting to think this of the living we learn to think it of the dead; and Fenton, with all his kindness for Waller, has the luck to mark the exact time when his genius passed the zenith, which he places at his fifty-fifth year. This is to allot the mind but a small portion. Intellectual decay is doubtless not uncommon; but it seems not to be universal. Newton was, in his eighty-fifth year, improving his Chronology a few days before his death; and Waller appears not, in my opinion, to have lost at eighty-two any part of his poetical power.

His Sacred Poems do not please like some of his other works; but before the fatal fifty-five, had he written on the same subjects, his success would hardly have been better.[62]

It has been the frequent lamentation of good men that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry: that they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known; and it may not be improper to inquire why they have miscarried.

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactic poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of Nature, the flowers of the spring and the harvests of autumn, the vicissitudes of the tide and the revolutions of the sky, and praise the Maker for his works, in lines which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.[63]

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but, few as there are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

[62] His poem of 'Divine Love' was undertaken, as Aubrey tells us, "at the instance and request of the Lady Viscountess Ranelagh," *i. e.* the sister of Robert Boyle.

[63] All the translators of the Psalms of David are so far from doing honour, or at least justice, to that divine poet, that methinks they revile him worse than Shimei. And Buchanan himself (though much the best of them all, and indeed a great person) comes, in my opinion, no less short of David than his country does of Judea.—COWLEY: *Preface to Pindarique Odes.*

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel, the imagination: but religion must be shown as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and, such as it is, it is known already.

From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

The employments of pious meditation are faith, thanksgiving, repentance, and supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance, trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament: to recommend them by tropes and figures is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.[64]

As much of Waller's reputation was owing to the softness

[64] Mason, the poet, in his little volume on 'Church Music,' has styled these excellent remarks on sacred verse as a condemnation of all devotional poetry whatever; as a string, in short, of paradoxical dogmas.

and smoothness of his numbers, it is proper to consider those minute particulars to which a versifier must attend.

He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry commenced. The poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model; and he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies,[65] which, though merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified.

But he was rather smooth than strong; of *the full resounding line*, which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The critical decision has given the praise of strength to Denham, and of sweetness to Waller.

His excellence of versification has some abatements. He uses the expletive *do* very frequently; and, though he lived to see it almost universally ejected, was not more careful to avoid it in his last compositions than in his first. Praise had given him confidence; and, finding the world satisfied, he satisfied himself.

His rhymes are sometimes weak words: *so* is found to make the rhyme twice in ten lines, and occurs often as a rhyme through his book.

His double rhymes in heroic verse have been censured by Mrs. Philips, who was his rival in the translation of Corneille's 'Pompey;' and more faults might be found, were not the inquiry below attention.

He sometimes uses the obsolete termination of verbs, as *waxeth*, *affecteth;* and sometimes retains the final syllable of the preterite, as *amazed*, *supposed*, of which I know not whether it is not to the detriment of our language that we have totally rejected them.

Of triplets he is sparing; but he did not wholly forbear them: of an Alexandrine he has given no example.

The general character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He is never pathetic, and very rarely sublime. He seems

[65] 'Nosce teipsum. This oracle expounded in two elegies: I. Of Humane Knowledge: II. Of the Soule of Man and the Immortalitie thereof, 1599.'

neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply. They had however then, perhaps, that grace of novelty which they are now often supposed to want by those who, having already found them in later books, do not know or inquire who produced them first. This treatment is unjust. Let not the original author lose by his imitators.

Praise, however, should be due before it is given. The author of Waller's Life ascribes to him the first practice of what Erythræus and some late critics call *alliteration*—of using in the same verse many words beginning with the same letter. But this knack, whatever be its value, was so frequent among early writers, that Gascoigne, a writer of the sixteenth century,[66] warns the young poet against affecting it; Shakespeare, in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' is supposed to ridicule it; and in another play the sonnet of Holofernes fully displays it.

He borrows too many of his sentiments and illustrations from the old Mythology, for which it is vain to plead the example of ancient poets: the deities which they introduced so frequently were considered as realities, so far as to be received by the imagination, whatever sober reason might even then determine. But of these images time has tarnished the splendour. A fiction, not only detected but despised, can never afford a solid basis to any position, though sometimes it may furnish a transient allusion, or slight illustration. No modern monarch can be much exalted by hearing that, as Hercules had his *club*, he has his *navy*.

But of the praise of Waller, though much may be taken away, much will remain; for it cannot be denied that he added something to our elegance of diction, and something to our propriety of thought; and to him may be applied what Tasso said, with equal spirit and justice, of himself and Guarini, when, having perused the 'Pastor Fido,' he cried out, "If he had not read 'Aminta,' he had not excelled it."

[66] He advises him not to hunt a letter to death.—GASCOIGNE'S *Certayne Notes of Instruction*, 1575.

As Waller professed himself to have learned the art of versification from Fairfax,[67] it has been thought proper to subjoin a specimen of his work, which, after Mr. Hoole's translation, will perhaps not be soon reprinted.[68] By knowing the state in which Waller found our poetry, the reader may judge how much he improved it.

I.

"Erminia's steed (this while) his mistresse bore
Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene,
Her feeble hand the bridle reines forlore,
Halfe in a swoune she was for feare I weene;
But her flit courser spared nere the more,
To beare her through the desart woods vnseene
Of her strong foes, that chas'd her through the plaine,
And still pursu'd, but still pursu'd in vaine.

II.

Like as the wearie hounds at last retire,
Windlesse, displeased, from the fruitlesse chace,
When the slie beast Tapisht in bush and brire,
No art nor paines can rowse out of his place:
The Christian knights so full of shame and ire
Returned backe, with faint and wearie pace:
Yet still the fearfull Dame fled, swift as winde,
Nor euer staid, nor ever lookt behinde.

[67] Waller had other obligations to Fairfax. Here is an instance:—

So when a lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And angry grows, if he that first took pain
To tame his youth, approach the haughty beast,
He bends to him, but frights away the rest.

WALLER: *Panegyric on the Protector.*

So when a lion shakes his dreadful mane,
And beats his tail, with courage proud and wroth,
If his commander come, who first took pain
To tame his youth, his lofty crest down go'th.

FAIRFAX'S *Tasso*, B. viii. st. 83.

[68] Since this was said, there have been three editions of Fairfax's translation. Johnson wrote the Dedication to Queen Charlotte, prefixed (1763) to the translation of Tasso by Hoole.

III.

Through thicke and thinne, all night, all day, she driued,
Withouten comfort, companie, or guide,
Her plaints and teares with euery thought reuiued,
She heard and saw her greefes, but nought beside.
But when the sunne his burning chariot diued
In Thetis' waue, and wearie teame vntide,
On Iordans sandie banks her course she staid,
At last, there downe she light, and downe she laid.

IV.

Her teares, her drinke; her food, her sorrowings,
This was her diet that vnhappie night:
But sleepe (that sweet repose and quiet brings)
To ease the greefes of discontented wight,
Spred foorth his tender, soft, and nimble wings,
In his dull armes foulding the virgin bright:
And Loue, his mother, and the Graces kept
Strong watch and warde, while this faire Ladie slept.

V.

The birds awakte her with their morning song,
Their warbling musicke pearst her tender eare,
The murmuring brookes and whistling windes among
The ratling boughes, and leaues, their parts did beare;
Her eies vnclos'd beheld the groues along
Of swaines and shepherd groomes, that dwellings weare;
And that sweet noise birds, winds, and waters sent,
Prouokte again the virgin to lament.

VI.

Her plaints were interrupted with a sound
That seem'd from thickest bushes to proceed,
Some iolly shepherd sung a lustie round,
And to his voice had tun'd his oaten reed;
Thither she went, an old man there she found,
(At whose right hand his little flocke did feed,)
Sat making baskets his three sonnes among,
That learn'd their father's art, and learn'd his song.

VII.

Beholding one in shining armes appeare,
The seelie man and his were sore dismaid;
But sweet Erminia comforted their feare,
Her ventall vp, her visage open laid,

You happie folke, of heau'n beloued deare,
Worke on (quoth she) upon your harmlesse traid,
These dreadfull armes I beare no warfare bring
To your sweet toile, nor those sweet tunes you sing.

VIII.

But, father, since this land, these townes and towres,
Destroied are with sword, with fire and spoile,
How may it be vnhurt that you and yours
In safetie thus applie your harmelesse toile?
My sonne (quoth he) this poore estate of ours
Is euer safe from storm of warlike broile;
This wildernesse doth vs in safetie keepe,
No thundring drum, no trumpet breakes our sleepe.

IX.

Haply iust heau'n's defence and shield of right
Doth loue the innocence of simple swains,
The thunderbolts on highest mountaines light,
And seld or neuer strike the lower plaines:
So kings haue cause to feare *Bellonaes* might,
Not they whose sweat and toile their dinner gaines,
Nor euer greedie soldier was entised
By pouertie, neglected and despised.

X.

O pouertie, chefe of the heau'nly brood,
Dearer to me than wealth or kingly crowne!
No wish for honour, thirst of others' good,
Can moue my hart, contented with mine owne:
We quench our thirst with water of this flood,
Nor fear we poison should therein be throwne:
These little flocks of sheepe and tender goates
Giue milke for food, and wooll to make vs coates.

XI.

We little wish, we need but little wealth,
From cold and hunger vs to cloath and feed;
These are my sonnes, their care preserues from stealth
Their father's flocks, nor servants moe I need:
Amid these groues I walke oft for my health,
And to the fishes, birds, and beastes giue heed,
How they are fed, in forrest, spring, and lake,
And their contentment for ensample take.

XII.

Time was (for each one hath his doting time,
These siluer locks were golden tresses than)
That countrie life I hated as a crime,
And from the forrest's sweet contentment ran.
To Memphis' stately pallace would I clime,
And there became the mightie Caliphes man,
And though I but a simple gardner weare,
Yet could I marke abuses, see and heare.

XIII.

Entised on with hope of future gaine,
I suffred long what did my soule displease;
But when my youth was spent my hope was vaine,
I felt my native strength at last decrease;
I gan my losse of lustie yeeres complaine,
And wisht I had enjoy'd the countries peace!
I bod the court farewell, and with content
My later age here haue I quiet spent.

XIV.

While thus he spake, Erminia husht and still
His wise discourses heard, with great attention;
His speeches graue those idle fancies kill,
Which in her troubled soule bred such dissention;
After much thought reformed was her will,
Within those woods to dwell was her intention,
Till fortune should occasion new afford,
To turne her home to her desired Lord.

XV.

She said therefore, O shepherd fortunate!
That troubles some didst whilom feele and proue,
Yet liust now in this contented state,
Let my mishap thy thoughts to pitie moue,
To entertaine me as a willing mate
In shepherd's life, which I admire and loue;
Within these pleasant groves perchance my hart,
Of her discomforts, may vnload some part.

XVI.

If gold or wealth of most esteemed deare,
If iewels rich, thou diddest hold in prise,
Such store thereof, such plentie haue I heare,
As to a greedie minde might well suffice:

With that downe trickled many a siluer teare,
Two christall streames fell from her watrie eies;
Part of her sad misfortunes than she told,
And wept, and with her wept that shepherd old.

XVII.

With speeches kinde, he gan the virgin deare
Towards his cottage gently home to guide;
His aged wife there made her homely cheare,
Yet welcomde her, and plast her by her side.
The Princesse dond a poore pastoraes geare,
A kerchiefe course vpon her head she tide;
But yet her gestures and her lookes (I gesse)
Were such as ill beseem'd a shepherdesse.

XVIII.

Not those rude garments could obscure, and hide
The heau'nly beautie of her angels face,
Nor was her princely ofspring damnifide,
Or ought disparag'de, by those labours bace;
Her little flocks to pasture would she guide,
And milke her goates, and in their folds them place,
Both cheese and butter could she make, and frame
Her selfe to please the shepherd and his dame."[69]

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[69] *Shakespeare* looks abroad
From some high cliff, superior, and enjoys
The elemental war. But *Waller* longs,
All on the margin of some flowing stream,
To spread his careless limbs amid the cool
Of plantain shades, and to the listening deer
The tale of slighted vows and love's disdain
Resound soft warbling all the livelong day:
Consenting Zephyr sighs; the weeping rill
Joins in his plaint melodious; meets the groves;
And hill and dale with all their echoes mourn.
Such and so various are the tastes of men.

AKENSIDE.

*** Since the preceding sheets were worked off, I have discovered that "Edmund Waller, Esq.," was married to his first wife in the church of St. Margaret's, Westminster, on the 15th July, 1631, when he was twenty-six years of age.

JOHN DRYDEN.

DRYDEN.

1631–1700.

Born at Aldwinkle, in Northamptonshire — Educated at Westminster and Cambridge — His late appearance as a Poet — His first Verses — His Panegyric on Cromwell — His Poem on the Restoration — His first Play — Revival of the Drama — Heroic Plays with Rhyme — Becomes a constant Writer for the Stage — Made Poet Laureate — His controversy with Settle and Shadwell — Is ridiculed by the Duke of Buckingham in 'The Rehearsal' — Is beaten by bullies hired by the Earl of Rochester — His Political and Religious Satires — Publishes 'Absalom and Achitophel' — 'The Medal' — 'Mac Flecknoe' — Is converted to the Church of Rome — Publishes 'The Hind and the Panther' — Loses his office of Poet Laureâte — His translations from Juvenal, Ovid, and Persius — His translation of Virgil — Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, and Fables — Death and burial in Westminster Abbey — Works and Character.

Of the great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they reverenced his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing therefore can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.[1]

John Dryden was born August 9, 1631,[2] at Aldwinkle, near Oundle, the son of Erasmus Dryden of Tichmarsh, who was the third son of Sir Erasmus Dryden, Baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon.[3]

[1] This is said too incautiously. So much since Johnson wrote has been discovered about Dryden (chiefly by the industry of Malone), that we now know more of him than of any other author of his age.

[2] Among the Ashmolean MSS. (No. 243, Black's 'Catalogue,' col. 206) Dryden's nativity is fixed on the 19th August, 1631. The exact period of his birth is still uncertain.

[3] Originally in Cumberland. The first migration of a Dryden into Northamptonshire occurred early in the reign of Elizabeth; and the first connexion of a Dryden with the county of Huntingdon in or about 1632.

He is reported by his last biographer, Derrick,[4] to have inherited from his father[5] an estate of two hundred a-year, and to have been bred, as was said, an Anabaptist. For either of these particulars no authority is given.[6] Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to have oppressed him; or, if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But though he had many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony. He was, indeed, sometimes reproached for his first religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick's intelligence was partly true, and partly erroneous.

From Westminster School, where he was instructed as one of the King's scholars by Dr. Busby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 [11th May] elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge.[7]

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Hastings,[8] composed with great ambition of such conceits as, notwithstanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the smallpox; and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems; at last exalts them into stars, and says,

> "No comet need foretell his change drew on,
> Whose corpse might seem a constellation."[9]

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[4] Derrick's 'Life of Dryden' was written for an edition of Dryden's 'Miscellaneous Poems,' 4 vols. 8vo. 1760. It is a poor performance.

[5] His father died in 1654. This inheritance was two-thirds of a small estate near Blakesley, in Northamptonshire, worth in all about 60*l.* a-year. The remaining third became the property of Dryden at his mother's death in 1676. The poet was the eldest of fourteen children.

[6] Derrick's authority was probably the lampoons of the last age.—MALONE'S *Life of Dryden*, p. 37.

[7] At Trinity College. He was admitted to a Bachelor's Degree in January, 1653–4, and to his M.A. Degree 17th June, 1668.

[8] One of ninety-eight. Published in a volume entitled 'Tears of the Muses on the Death of Henry, Lord Hastings.' 8vo. 1649.

[9] Mason relates, in his 'Life of Whitehead,' that Gray, who admired Dryden almost beyond bounds, used to remark that the poem on Lord Hastings gave not so much as the slightest promise of future excellence, and seemed to indicate a bad natural eár for versification.

At the university he does not appear to have been eager of poetical distinction, or to have lavished his early wit either on fictitious subjects or public occasions. He probably considered that he who proposed to be an author ought first to be a student. He obtained, whatever was the reason, no fellowship in the college.[10] Why he was excluded cannot now be known, and it is vain to guess: had he thought himself injured, he knew how to complain. In the 'Life of Plutarch' he mentions his education in the college with gratitude;[11] but in a prologue at Oxford he has these lines:—

> "Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
> Than his own mother-university;
> Thebes did his green, unknowing youth engage;
> He chooses Athens in his riper age."[12]

It was not till the death of Cromwell,[13] in 1658 [Sept. 3], that he became a public candidate for fame, by publishing [1659] 'Heroic Stanzas on the late Lord Protector,' which, compared with the verses of Sprat and Waller on the same occasion, were sufficient to raise great expectations of the rising poet.

When the King was restored, Dryden, like the other panegyrists of usurpation, changed his opinion or his profession, and published [1660] 'Astræa Redux; a Poem on the happy Restoration and Return of his sacred Majesty King Charles the Second.'

[10] "While at college our author's conduct seems not to have been uniformly regular. He was subjected to slight punishment for contumacy to the Vice-Master; and seems, according to the statement of an obscure libeller [supposed to be Shadwell], to have been engaged in some public and notorious dispute with a nobleman's son, probably on account of the indulgence of his turn for satire."—Walter Scott, p. 22. See also Malone, p. 16.

[11] I read Plutarch in the library of Trinity College in Cambridge, to which foundation I gratefully acknowledge a great part of my education.—Dryden.

[12] *To Mr. Ralph Rawson, lately Fellow of Brasen Nose College.*

> Though I of Cambridge was, and far above
> Your mother Oxford did my Cambridge love,
> I those affections (for your sake) remove,
> And above Cambridge now do Oxford love.

Sir Aston Cokaine's *Poems*, 1658.

[13] He had appeared before this as a poet a second time, by some commendatory verses prefixed, in 1650, to the 'Poems of John Hoddesdon.' .... "After residing seven years at Cambridge, about the middle of the year 1657 he removed to London."—Malone, p. 26.

The reproach of inconstancy was on this occasion shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace! If he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.[14]

The same year[15] he praised the new King in a second poem on his restoration. In the 'Astræa' was the line,

> "An horrid *stillness* first *invades* the *ear*,
> And in that silence we the tempest fear"—

for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. *Silence* is indeed mere privation; and, so considered, cannot *invade;* but privation likewise certainly is *darkness*, and probably *cold;* yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that *darkness* hinders him from his work, or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is also privation; yet who has made any difficulty of assigning to Death a dart and the power of striking?

In settling the order of his works there is some difficulty; for even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same; nor can the first editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information.[16]

[14] His near relation, Sir Gilbert Pickering (d. 1668), was a member of the Long Parliament, Chamberlain to Cromwell, and one of Cromwell's mock peers. Dryden, it is said, was "Clerk" to Sir Gilbert.

A folio broadside (London: printed for J. Smith, 1681), entitled 'An Elegy on the Usurper O. C., by the Author of Absalom and Achitophel, published to show the loyalty and integrity of the poet,' has this 'Postscript:'—

> The printing of these rhymes afflicts me more
> Than all the drubs I in Rose Alley bore:
> This shows my nauseous mercenary pen
> Would praise the vilest and the worst of men.

And this concluding couplet:—

> He who writes on and cudgels can defy,
> And knowing he 'll be beaten still writes on—am I.—J. D.

[15] No, the next year. 'To His Sacred Majesty a Panegyrick on his Coronation. 1661,' fol.

[16] "In settling the dates and succession of Dryden's plays, Dr. Johnson was

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known,[17] because it was not printed till it was some years afterwards altered and revived; but since the plays are said to be printed in the order in which they were written, from the dates of some those of others may be inferred; and thus it may be collected, that in 1663, in the thirty-second year of his life, he commenced a writer for the stage; compelled undoubtedly by necessity, for he appears never to have loved that exercise of his genius, or to have much pleased himself with his own dramas.

Of the stage, when he had once invaded it, he kept possession for many years; not, indeed, without the competition of rivals, who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of critics, which was often poignant and often just; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might be the final determination of the public.

His first piece was a comedy called the 'Wild Gallant.'[18] He began with no happy auguries; for his performance was so much disapproved that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect state to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet sufficiently defective to vindicate the critics.[19]

I wish that there were no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramatic performances; it will be fit,

led into many errors by following Langbaine, who, in his 'Account of the English Dramatic Poets,' adopted a very absurd method of arranging them alphabetically; and frequently annexed to the several pieces the date of a late instead of the earliest edition."—MALONE'S *Life of Dryden*, p. 56.

[17] This is not the case. The first performance of his first play was on the 5th February, 1662-3. See the Prologue to the 'Wild Gallant, on its first performance,' and Evelyn under 5th Feb. 1662–3.

[18] First acted 5th Feb. 1662–3, and first published in 1669, 4to.

[19] 23rd Feb. 1662–3.—Took coach and to Court, and there saw 'The Wild Gallant' performed by the King's house, but it was ill acted, and the play so poor a thing as ever I saw in my life almost, and so little answering the name, that from the beginning to the end I could not, nor can at this time, tell certainly which was the Wild Gallant. The King did not seem pleased at all, the whole play, nor anybody else. My Lady Castlemaine was all worth seeing to-night, and little Steward [la Belle Stuart].—PEPYS. Dryden has a copy of verses to the Countess of Castlemaine on her encouraging his first play.

however, to enumerate them, and to take especial notice of those that are distinguished by any peculiarity, intrinsic or concomitant; for the composition and fate of eight-and-twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664 he published the 'Rival Ladies,'[20] which he dedicated to the Earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer and a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatic rhyme, which he defends in his dedication with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in the 'Indian Queen,' a tragedy in rhyme.[21] The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The 'Indian Emperor' was published in 1667.[22] It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to 'Howard's Indian Queen.' Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills, distributed at the door; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in the 'Rehearsal,' when Bayes tells how many reams he has printed, to instil into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of Night, which Rymer has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.[23]

[20] 4th Aug. 1664.—To a play at the King's house; 'The Rival Ladies,' a very innocent and most pretty witty play. I was much pleased with it.

18th July, 1666.—Walked to Woolwich, reading 'The Rival Ladies' all the way, and find it a most pleasant and fine writ play.—PEPYS.

[21] 27th January, 1663–4.—To Covent Garden . . . . in the way observing the street full of coaches at the new play, at 'The Indian Queen,' which for show they say exceeds 'Henry VIII.'—PEPYS.

1st Feb. 1663–4.—To the King's Theatre, and there saw 'The Indian Queen' acted, which indeed is a most pleasant show, and beyond my expectation; the play good, but spoiled with the rhyme, which breaks the sense.—PEPYS.

5th Feb. 1663–4.—I saw 'The Indian Queen' acted, a tragedy, well written, so beautiful with rich scenes as the like had never been seen here, or haply (except rarely) elsewhere on a mercenary theatre.—EVELYN.

[22] Entered at Stationers' Hall 26th May, 1665, and first acted, there is reason to believe, in the winter of 1664–5.—MALONE, p. 57.

Pepys speaks of it for the first time under the 15th January, 1666–7; but it is clear, from what he says, that it had been on the stage some time.

[23] Dryden has executed a description of Night in one of his tragedies. . . . . Dryden's lines are vague, bombastic, and senseless.—WORDSWORTH: *Supplement to Preface.*

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced soon after the Restoration, as it seems by the Earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second,[24] who had formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play[25] is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramatic rhyme, in confutation of the preface to the 'Duke of Lerma,' in which Sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667 he published 'Annus Mirabilis, the Year of Wonders,' which may be esteemed one of his most elaborate works.

It is addressed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some perhaps ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance: "I am satisfied that as the Prince and General [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the best subjects I ever had, so what I have written on them is much better than what I have performed on any other. As I

[24] We owe to Charles II. the taste for heroic plays, or plays in rhyme, and to Lord Orrery the earliest productions of the kind. "I have now finished a play in the French manner," Lord Orrery writes, "because I heard the King declare himself more in favour of their way of writing than ours. My poor attempt cannot please his Majesty, but my example may incite others who can." His first productions in this way were 'The History of Henry V.' and 'Mustapha, a Tragedy.' The King took an interest in them. "I will now tell you," the King writes to him, Feb. 26, 1662, "that I have read your first play, which I like very well, and do intend to bring it upon the stage, as soon as my company have their new stage in order, that the scenes may be worthy the words they are to set forth; for the last [play] I have only seen in my Lord Lieutenant's hands, but will read it as soon as I have leisure."—ORRERY'S *Letters*, p. 65.

[25] 'The Indian Emperor' was probably the first of Dryden's performances which drew upon him in an eminent degree the attention of the public.—WALTER SCOTT: *Life of Dryden*, p. 71.

have endeavoured to adorn my poem with noble thoughts, so much more to express those thoughts with elocution."

It is written in quatrains, or heroic stanzas of four lines; a measure which he had learned from the 'Gondibert' of Davenant, and which he then thought the most majestic that the English language affords. Of this stanza he mentions the incumbrances, increased as they were by the exactness which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his custom to recommend his works, by representation of the difficulties that he had encountered, without appearing to have sufficiently considered that where there is no difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be, in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained. Dryden, in his dedication to the Earl of Orrery [1664], had defended dramatic rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays,[26] had [1665] censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself [1667] in his 'Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry;' Howard, in his preface to the 'Duke of Lerma,' animadverted [1668] on the Vindication; and Dryden, in a preface to the 'Indian Emperor,' replied [1668] to the Animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely. The dedication to this play is dated[27] the year in which the 'Annus Mirabilis' was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help,[28] by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play [1667], but was added [1668] when it was afterwards reprinted; and as the 'Duke of Lerma' did not appear till 1668,[29] the same year in which the dialogue was published,[30] there was time enough for enmity to grow up be-

[26] To a collection of his own Plays, fol. 1665.

[27] Oct. 12, 1667.

[28] There is no inconsistency whatever. The help which Johnson says he receives from Langbaine he might have derived from the opening paragraph of the Preface to 'The Indian Emperor.' I may add, that the Preface to 'The Indian Emperor' was afterwards omitted by Dryden, and that it is wanting even in many copies of the second edition.

[29] The first night of 'The Duke of Lerma' was 20th Feb. 1667–8.—PEPYS, *and Lord Chamberlain's MS. Warrant Books.*

[30] No, the year after.

tween authors, who, writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that in 1668 he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureate.[31] The salary of the laureate had been raised in favour of Jonson, by Charles the First, from a hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year and a tierce of wine; a revenue in those days not inadequate to the conveniences of life.

The same year[32] he published his 'Essay on Dramatic Poetry,' an elegant and instructive dialogue, in which we are told by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the Earl of Dorset. This work seems to have given Addison a model for his Dialogues upon Medals.

'Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen' (1668), is a tragi-comedy.[33] In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions? and determines very justly, that, of the plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science, the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive. He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.[34]

'Sir Martin Marr-all' (1668)[35] is a comedy, published without

[31] Davenant died in April, 1668, and Dryden was not appointed Poet Laureate till Aug. 1670. He received, however, the money and the wine from the date of Davenant's death.

[32] No, the year before, viz. in 1667.

[33] 2nd March, 1666–7.—After dinner with my wife to the King's House, to see 'The Maiden Queen' [first night], a new play of Dryden's, mightily commended for the regularity of it, and the strain and wit; and the truth is there is a comical part done by Nell [Gwyn], which is Florimel, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again by man or woman. The King and the Duke of York were at the play.—Pepys.

In the Preface, Dryden tells us that the King graced it with the title of *his* play. The King saw it again at the theatre on the 5th March, 1666-7; and it was acted at Court on the 18th April, 1667.—*Lord Chamberlain's MS. Warrant Books*, vi. 129.

[34] 18th Jan. 1667-8.—To the Change, where I bought 'The Maiden Queen,' a play newly printed, which I like at the King's House so well, of Mr. Dryden's, which he himself in his preface seems to brag of, and is indeed a good play.—Pepys.

[35] 'Sir Martin Marr-all' opened the autumn season of 1667, and was first acted

preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes, that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing however that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.[36]

'The Tempest' (1670[37]) is an alteration of Shakespeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant, "whom," says he, "I found of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him in which he could not suddenly produce a thought extremely pleasant and surprising; and those first thoughts of his, contrary to the Latin proverb, were not always the least happy, and as his fancy was quick, so likewise were the products of it remote and new. He borrowed not of any other, and his imaginations were such as could not easily enter into any other man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was, that to Shakespeare's monster Caliban is added a sister-monster Sycorax; and a woman who in the original play had never seen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

(at the Duke's Theatre) 15th August, 1667, the King and Court being present.—Pepys, 15th August, 1667; and *Lord Chamberlain's MS. Warrant Books*, vi. 125.

The King saw it again (as I gather from the 'Lord Chamberlain's Books') 21st Aug., Oct. 4, Nov. 5, 1667; Jan. 8, 1667–8; Feb. 3, 1667–8; and April 18, 1668. The performance on the 3rd of Feb. 1668, was "at Court."

15th Aug. 1667.—Sir W. Pen and I to the Duke's house; where a new play. The King and Court there; the house full, and an act begun. And so we went to the King's.

16th Aug. 1667.—My wife and I to the Duke's play-house, where we saw the new play acted yesterday, 'The High Innocence, or Sir Martin Marr-all;' a play made by my lord Duke of Newcastle, but, as everybody says, corrected by Dryden. It is the most entire piece of mirth, a complete farce from one to the other, that certainly was ever writ. I never laughed so in all my life, and at very good wit therein, not fooling. The house full, and in all things of mighty content to me.—Pepys.

The success of the play was owing, in a great measure, to the excellent acting of Nokes, the Liston of his time.

[36] 'Sir Martin Marr-all' was originally a mere translation from the French, made by William, Duke of Newcastle, and by him presented to Dryden, who revised and adapted it to the stage. . . . None of Dryden's pieces appear to have been more successful than this.—Malone, p. 93.

[37] Acted for the first time 7th Nov. 1667. See Pepys under that date.

'An Evening's Love, or the Mock Astrologer,'[38] a comedy (1671), is dedicated to the illustrious Duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasing to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten. Of Newcastle's works nothing is now known but his 'Treatise on Horsemanship.'

The Preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the fathers of the English drama. Shakespeare's plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of 'Cinthio,' those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish stories; Jonson only made them for himself. His criticisms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to say, that he was not the first nor perhaps the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism he alleges a favourable expression of the King: "He only desired that they who accuse me of thefts would steal him plays like mine;" and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

'Tyrannic Love, or the Royal Martyr' (1672),[39] was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the sport of criticism; and were at length [1681], if his own confession may be trusted,[40] the shame of the writer.

[38] It was produced at the King's Theatre 12th June, 1668, both the King and Queen being present.—*Lord Chamberlain's MS. Warrant Books*, vi. 129.

Mrs. Pepys saw at the King's House, 19th June, 1668, "the new play, 'Evening Love' of Dryden;" and Pepys himself saw it on the 20th and 22nd.

22nd June, 1668.—To the King's playhouse, and saw an act or two of the new play, 'Evening Love,' again, but like it not. Calling this day at Herringman's, he tells me Dryden do himself call it but a fifth-rate play.—PEPYS.

[39] Should be 1670. The entry in the Stationers' Book is 14th July, 1669.

[40] I remember some verses of my own, ['Maximin and Almanzor,'] which cry vengeance upon me for their extravagance, and which I wish heartily in the same fire with Statius and Chapman.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of the Spanish Friar*, 1681. See p. 381.

Near

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know that it was "contrived and written" in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse, or perhaps shortness of time was his private boast in the form of an apology.

It was written before the 'Conquest of Granada,' but published after it.[41] The design is to recommend piety. "I considered that pleasure was not the only end of poesy, and that even the instructions of morality were not so wholly the business of a poet, as that precepts and examples of piety were to be omitted. For to leave that employment altogether to the clergy were to forget that religion was first taught in verse, which the laziness or dullness of succeeding priesthood turned afterwards into prose." Thus foolishly could Dryden write rather than not show his malice to the parsons.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of the 'Empress of Morocco,' a tragedy written in rhyme by Elkanah Settle; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous on the stage, but, in the confidence of success, had published his play, "with sculptures" and a preface[42] of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court ladies.[43]

Dryden could not now repress these emotions, which he called

> Near these a nursery erects its head,
> Where Queens are form'd, and future heroes bred;
> Where unfledg'd actors learn to laugh and cry,
> Where infant punks their tender voices try,
> And little Maximins the gods defy.
>
> DRYDEN: *Mac Flecknoe*, 1682.

Maximin was a heathen. . . . He defies the gods of Rome.—DRYDEN: *Preface to Tyrannic Love*, 1670.

[41] Not the case; 'Tyrannic Love' was published in 1670, and the 'Conquest of Granada' in 1672.

[42] There is no preface; the defiance occurs in the dedication to Henry Howard, Earl of Norwich, afterwards eleventh Duke of Norfolk.

[43] The Earl of Mulgrave contributing a Prologue on the first occasion, and the Earl of Rochester a Prologue on the second occasion of its being acted at Court.

indignation, and others jealousy; but wrote[44] upon the play and the dedication such criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character: "He is an animal of a most deplored understanding, without conversation. His being is in a twilight of sense, and some glimmering of thought, which he can never fashion either into wit or English. His style is boisterous and rough-hewn; his rhyme incorrigibly lewd, and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-sounding. That little talent which he has is fancy. He sometimes labours with a thought; but with the pudder he makes to bring it into the world it is commonly still-born; so that for want of learning and elocution he will never be able to express anything either naturally or justly!"

This is not very decent; yet this is one of the pages in which criticism prevails over brutal fury. He proceeds: "He has a heavy hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing nonsense for them. Fools they will be in spite of him. His King, his two Empresses, his villain, and his sub-villain, nay his hero, have all a certain natural cast of the father. One turn of the countenance goes through all his children: their folly was born and bred in them, and something of the Elkanah will be visible."

This is Dryden's general declamation: I will not withhold from the reader a particular remark. Having gone through the first act, he says, "To conclude this act with the most rumbling piece of nonsense spoken yet,

> 'To flattering lightning our feign'd smiles conform,
> Which back'd with thunder do but gild a storm.'

[44] Dr. Johnson ascribes the whole of this piece to Dryden, and does not seem to have been apprized that a great part of it was written by Shadwell and Crowne. —Malone, ii. 273.

In my notes on a play called 'The Empress of Morocco' (I call 'em mine, because above three parts of four were written by me) I gave vent to more ill-nature in me than I will do again.—Crowne: *Epistle before Caligula, a Tragedy*, 1698, 4to.

Settle, in his reply, ascribes it to three persons; and Dennis, whose means of information were good, assigns the composition to Dryden, Shadwell, and Crowne.

"*Conform a smile to lightning*, make a *smile* imitate *lightning*, and *flattering lightning:* lightning sure is a threatening thing. And this lightning must *gild a storm*. Now if I must conform by smiles to lightning, then my smiles must gild a storm too: to *gild* with *smiles* is a new invention of gilding. And gild a storm by being *backed with thunder*. Thunder is part of the storm; so one part of the storm must help to *gild* another part, and help by *backing;* as if a man would gild a thing the better for being backed, or having a load upon his back. So that here is *gilding* by *conforming*, *smiling*, *lightning*, *backing*, and *thundering*. The whole is as if I should say thus: I will make my counterfeit smiles look like a flattering stone-horse, which, being backed with a trooper, does but gild the battle. I am mistaken if nonsense is not here pretty thick sown. Sure the poet writ these two lines aboard some smack in a storm, and, being sea-sick, spewed up a good lump of clotted nonsense at once."

Here is, perhaps, a sufficient specimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's, has never been thought worthy of republication, and is not easily to be found, it may gratify curiosity to quote it more largely.

> "Whene'er she bleeds,
> He no severer a damnation needs,
> That dares pronounce the sentence of her death,
> Than the infection that attends that breath."

"*That attends that breath.* The poet is at *breath* again; *breath* can never 'scape him; and here he brings in a *breath* that must be *infectious* with *pronouncing* a sentence; and this sentence is not to be pronounced till the condemned party *bleeds;* that is, she must be executed first, and sentenced after; and the *pronouncing* of this *sentence* will be infectious; that is, others will catch the disease of that sentence, and this infecting of others will torment a man's self. The whole is thus: *when she bleeds, thou needest no greater hell or torment to thyself than infecting of others by pronouncing a sentence upon her.* What hodgepodge does he make here! Never was Dutch grout such clogging, thick, indigestible stuff. But this is but a taste to stay the stomach: we shall have a more plentiful mess presently.

"Now to dish up the poet's broth that I promised:

> 'For when we 're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd,
> Of nature's grosser burden we 're discharg'd,
> Then gently, as a happy lover's sigh,
> Like wand'ring meteors through the air we 'll fly,
> And in our airy walk, as subtle guests,
> We 'll steal into our cruel fathers' breasts,
> There read their souls, and track each passion's sphere;
> See how Revenge moves there, Ambition here;
> And in their orbs view the dark characters
> Of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars.
> We 'll blot out all those hideous draughts, and write
> Pure and white forms; then with a radiant light
> Their breasts encircle, till their passions be
> Gentle as nature in its infancy:
> Till soften'd by our charms their furies cease,
> And their revenge resolves into a peace.
> Thus by our death their quarrel ends,
> Whom living we made foes, dead we 'll make friends.'

"If this be not a very liberal mess, I will refer myself to the stomach of any moderate guest. And a rare mess it is, far excelling any Westminster white-broth. It is a kind of giblet porridge, made of the giblets of a couple of young geese, stodged full of *meteors*, *orbs*, *spheres*, *track*, *hideous draughts*, *dark characters*, *white forms*, and *radiant lights*, designed not only to please appetite, and indulge luxury, but it is also physical, being an approved medicine to purge choler; for it is propounded by Morena, as a receipt to cure their fathers of their choleric humours; and were it written in characters as barbarous as the words, might very well pass for a doctor's bill. To conclude, it is porridge, 'tis a receipt, 'tis a pig with a pudding in the belly, 'tis I know not what; for certainly never any one that pretended to write sense had the impudence before to put such stuff as this into the mouths of those that were to speak it before an audience whom he did not take to be all fools; and after that to print it too, and expose it to the examination of the world. But let us see what we can make of this stuff:—

> 'For when we 're dead, and our freed souls enlarg'd'——

"Here he tells us what it is to be *dead;* it is to have *our freed souls set free.* Now if to have a soul set free is to be dead, then to have a *freed soul* set free is to have a dead man die.

'Then gentle, as a happy lover's sigh'—

"They two like one *sigh*, and that one *sigh*, like two wandering meteors,

'——Shall fly through the air'—

"That is, they shall mount above like falling stars, or else they shall skip like two jacks-with-lanterns, or will-with-a-wisp, and Madge-with-a-candle.

"*And in their airy walk steal into their cruel fathers' breasts like subtle guests.* So that their *fathers' breasts* must be in an *airy walk*, an airy *walk* of a *flier. And there they will read their souls, and track the spheres of their passions.* That is, these walking fliers, jack-with-a-lantern, &c., will put on his spectacles and fall a *reading souls*, and put on his pumps and fall a *tracking of spheres;* so that he will read and run, walk and fly, at the same time! Oh! Nimble Jack! *Then he will see how revenge here, how ambition there*—the birds will hop about. *And then view the dark characters of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and wars, in their orbs: Track the characters* to their forms! Oh! rare sport for Jack! Never was place so full of game as these breasts! You cannot stir, but flush a sphere, start a character, or unkennel an orb!"

Settle's is said to have been the first play embellished with sculptures;[45] those ornaments seem to have given poor Dryden great disturbance. He tries, however, to ease his pain by venting his malice in a parody.

"The poet has not only been so imprudent to expose all this stuff, but so arrogant to defend it with an epistle—like a saucy booth-keeper that, when he had put a cheat upon the people, would wrangle and fight with any that would not like it, or would offer to discover it; for which arrogance our poet receives

[45] And the first play published at two shillings. The usual price for a play at this period was one shilling. Johnson should have added that part of Settle's offence was his calling himself on the title-page "Servant to his Majesty."

this correction; and, to jerk him a little the sharper, I will not transpose his verse, but by the help of his own words trans-nonsense sense, that, by my stuff, people may judge the better what his is:

'Great Boy, thy tragedy and sculptures done
From press, and plates in fleets do homeward come:
And in ridiculous and humble pride,
Their course in ballad-singers' baskets guide,
Whose greasy twigs do all new beauties take,
From the gay shows thy dainty sculptures make.
Thy lines a mess of rhyming nonsense yield,
A senseless tale, with flattering fustian fill'd.
No grain of sense does in our line appear,
Thy words big bulks of boisterous bombast bear.
With noise they move, and from players' mouths rebound,
When their tongues dance to thy words' empty sound.
By thee inspir'd the rumbling verses roll,
As if that rhyme and bombast lent a soul:
And with that soul they seem taught duty too,
To huffing words does humble nonsense bow,
As if it would thy worthless worth enhance,
To th' lowest rank of fops thy praise advance;
To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is dear;
Their loud claps echo to the theatre.
From breaths of fools thy commendation spreads,
Fame sings thy praise with mouths of loggerheads.
With noise and laughing each thy fustian greets,
'Tis clapt by quires of empty-headed cits,
Who have their tribute sent, and homage given,
As men in whispers send loud noise to heaven.'

"Thus I have daubed him with his own puddle: and now we are come from aboard his dancing, masking, rebounding, breathing fleet; and, as if we had landed at Gotham, we meet nothing but fools and nonsense."

Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced between rage and terror—rage with little provocation, and terror with little danger. To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their

desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.[46]

The two parts of the 'Conquest of Granada' (1672) are written with a seeming determination to glut the public with dramatic wonders, to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantic heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without inquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestic madness, such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often reverenced, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the epilogue to the second part of the 'Conquest of Granada,' Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets who have written in the dramatic, epic, or lyric way. This promise was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatic writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this postscript, something equivalent; but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shows faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

[46] Mr. Settle, a man whose eminence was once allowed by the eminent, and whose accomplishments were confessed by the accomplished, in the latter part of a long life supported himself by an uncommon expedient. He had a standing elegy and epithalamium, of which only the first and last were leaves varied occasionally, and the intermediate pages were, by general terms, left applicable alike to every character. When any marriage became known, Settle ran to the bridegroom with his epithalamium; and when he heard of any death, ran to the heir with his elegy.

Who can think himself disgraced by a trade that was practised so long by the rival of Dryden, by the poet whose 'Empress of Morocco' was played before princes by ladies of the Court?—JOHNSON: *Idler*, No. 12.

A play thus written, in professed defiance of probability, naturally drew upon itself the vultures of the theatre. One of the critics that attacked it was Martin Clifford, to whom Sprat addressed the 'Life of Cowley,'[47] with such veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of instruction from his remarks. But let honest credulity beware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks,[48] by the favour of Dr. Percy, were at last obtained; and, that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to satisfy all reasonable desire.

In the first letter his observation is only general: "You do live," says he, "in as much ignorance and darkness as you did in the womb: your writings are like a Jack-of-all-trades' shop; they have a variety, but nothing of value; and if thou art not the dullest plant-animal that ever the earth produced, all that I have conversed with are strangely mistaken in thee."

In the second he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles than from Ancient Pistol. "But I am," says he, "strangely mistaken if I have not seen this very Almanzor of yours in some disguise about this town, and passing under another name. Pr'ythee tell me true, was not this Huffcap once the Indian Emperor? and at another time did he not call himself Maximin? Was not Lyndaraxa once called Almeria? I mean under Montezuma the Indian Emperor. I protest and vow they are either the same, or so alike that I cannot, for my heart, distinguish one from the other. You are therefore a strange unconscionable thief, that art not content to steal from others, but dost rob thy poor wretched self too."

Now was Settle's time to take his revenge. He wrote a

[47] He was made Master of the Charter House Nov. 17, 1671, and dying 10th Dec. 1677 was buried in St. Margaret's, Westminster. The monument which Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, had ordered to his memory was returned on the sculptor's hands at the Duke's death.

[48] 'Notes upon Mr. Dryden's Poems, in four Letters. By M. Clifford, late Master of the Charter House, London.' To which are annexed, 'Some Reflections upon the Hind and Panther. By another hand [Tom Brown]. London, printed in the year 1687.' 4to. The fourth Letter is dated 'Charter House, July 1, 1672.' There was probably a fifth. There is a break, as in my copy, of four pages between 16 and 21.

vindication of his own lines;[49] and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes his reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure, is no high commendation. To expose Dryden's method of analysing his expressions, he tries the same experiment upon the same description of the ships in the 'Indian Emperor,' of which however he does not deny the excellence; but intends to show, that by studied misconstruction everything may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of Settle's should be exhibited. The following observations are therefore extracted from a quarto pamphlet of ninety-five pages:

> "Fate after him below with pain did move,
> And Victory could scarce keep pace above."

"These two lines, if he can show me any sense or thought in, or anything but bombast and noise, he shall make me believe every word in his observations on Morocco sense."

In the 'Empress of Morocco' were these lines:

> "I 'll travel then to some remoter sphere,
> Till I find out new worlds, and crown you there."

On which Dryden[50] made this remark:

"I believe our learned author takes a sphere for a country; the sphere of Morocco, as if Morocco were the globe of earth and water; but a globe is no sphere neither, by his leave," &c. [To which Settle rejoins:] "So *sphere* must not be sense, unless it relate to a circular motion about a globe, in which sense the astronomers use it. I would desire him to expound these lines in 'Granada:'

[49] 'Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco, Revised, with some few Erratas to be printed instead of the Postscript, with the next edition of the Conquest of Granada. London, 1674.' 4to. Reissued in 1687 with a second title-page, 'Reflections on Several of Mr. Dryden's Plays, particularly the first and second part of the Conquest of Granada. By E. Settle, Gent. London.' 4to.

[50] Crowne, I suspect. See *ante*, p. 281.

'I 'll to the turrets of the palace go,
And add new fire to those that fight below.
Thence, Hero-like, with torches by my side,
(Far be the omen tho') my Love I 'll guide.
No, like his better fortune I 'll appear,
With open arms, loose veil, and flowing hair,
Just flying forward from my rowling sphere.'

"I wonder, if he be so strict, how he dares make so bold with *sphere* himself, and be so critical in other men's writings. Fortune is fancied standing on a globe, not on a *sphere*, as he told us in the first act.

"Because *Elkanah's similes are the most unlike things to what they are compared in the world*, I'll venture to start a simile in his 'Annus Mirabilis:' he gives this poetical description of the ship called the London:

'The goodly London in her gallant trim,
The Phœnix-daughter of the vanquisht old,
Like a rich bride does to the ocean swim,
And on her shadow rides in floating gold.
Her flag aloft spread ruffling in the wind,
And sanguine streamers seem'd the flood to fire:
The weaver, charm'd with what his loom design'd,
Goes on to sea, and knows not to retire.
With roomy decks her guns of mighty strength,
Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow laves,
Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,
She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves.'

What a wonderful pudder is here, to make all these poetical beautifications of a ship! that is, a *phœnix* in the first stanza, and but a *wasp* in the last: nay, to make his humble comparison of a *wasp* more ridiculous, he does not say it flew upon the waves as nimbly as a wasp, or the like, but it seemed a *wasp*. But our author at the writing of this was not in his altitudes, to compare ships to floating palaces; a comparison to the purpose was a perfection he did not arrive to till his *Indian Emperor's* days. But perhaps his similitude has more in it than we imagine; this ship had a great many guns in her, and they, put all together, made the sting in the wasp's tail: for this is all the reason I can guess why it seem'd a *wasp*. But,

because we will allow him all we can to help out, let it be a *phœnix sea-wasp*, and the rarity of such an animal may do much towards heightening the fancy.

. . . . . .

" It had been much more to his purpose, if he had designed to render the author's play little, to have searched for some such pedantry as this :

> ' Two ifs scarce make one possibility.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If Justice will take all, and nothing give,
> Justice, methinks, is not distributive.
> To die or kill you is the alternative ;
> Rather than take your life, I will not live.'

" Observe how prettily our author chops logic in heroic verse. Three such fustian, canting words as *distributive*, *alternative*, and *two ifs*, no man but himself would have come within the noise of. But he's a man of general learning, and all comes into his plays.

" 'Twould have done well, too, if he could have met with a rant or two worth the observation : such as,

> ' Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover's pace,
> Leave months and weeks behind thee in thy race.'

" But surely the Sun, whether he flies a lover's or not a lover's pace, leaves weeks and months, nay, years too, behind him in his race.

" Poor Robin, or any other of the philomathematics, would have given him satisfaction in the point.

> ' If I would kill thee now, thy fate 's so low,
> That I must stoop ere I can give the blow.
> But mine is fixt so far above thy crown,
> That all thy men,
> Piled on thy back, can never pull it down.'

" Now where that is, Almanzor's fate is fixed, I cannot guess ; but, wherever it is, I believe Almanzor, and think that all Abdalla's subjects, piled upon one another, might not pull

down his fate so well as without piling: besides, I think Abdalla so wise a man, that if Almanzor had told him piling his men upon his back might do the feat, he would scarce bear such a weight, for the pleasure of the exploit; but 'tis a huff, and let Abdalla do it if he dare.

. . . . . .

'The people like a headlong torrent go,
And every dam they break or overflow.
But, unoppos'd, they either lose their force,
Or wind in volumes to their former course.'

A very pretty allusion, contrary to all sense or reason. Torrents, I take it, let 'em wind never so much, can never return to their former course, unless he can suppose that fountains can go upwards, which is impossible: nay, more, in the foregoing page he tells us so too. A trick of a very unfaithful memory.

'But can no more than fountains upward flow;'

which of a *torrent*, which signifies a rapid stream, is much more impossible. Besides, if he goes to quibble, and say that 'tis possible, by art, water may be made return, and the same water run twice in one and the same channel, then he quite confutes what he says; for 'tis by being opposed that it runs into its former course; for all engines that make water so return do it by compulsion and opposition. Or, if he means a headlong torrent for a tide, which would be ridiculous, yet tides do not wind in volumes, but come foreright back (if their current lies straight) to their former course, and that by opposition of the sea-water that drives them back again.

. . . . . .

"And for fancy, when he lights of any thing like it, 'tis a wonder if it be not borrowed. As here, for example of, I find this fanciful thought in his 'Annus Mirabilis:'

'Old father Thames raised up his reverend head,
But fear'd the fate of Simois would return;
Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed,
And shrunk his waters back into his urn.'

"This is stolen from Cowley's 'Davideis,' p. 9:

> 'Swift Jordan started, and straight backward fled,
> Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.
> . . . . . .
> And when the Spaniards their assault begin,
> At once beat those without and these within.'

"This Almanzor speaks of himself; and sure for one man to conquer an army within the city and another without the city at once is something difficult; but this flight is pardonable to some we meet with in 'Granada.' Osmin, speaking of Almanzor,

> 'Who, like a tempest that outrides the wind,
> Made a just battle, ere the bodies join'd.'

Pray what does this honourable person mean by a *tempest that outrides the wind?* A tempest that outrides itself. To suppose a tempest without wind is as bad as supposing a man to walk without feet; for if he supposes the tempest to be something distinct from the wind, yet, as being the effect of wind only, to come before the cause is a little preposterous: so that, if he takes it one way, or if he takes it the other, those two *ifs* will scarcely make one *possibility.*" Enough of Settle.

'Marriage-à-la-Mode' (1673) is a comedy dedicated to the Earl of Rochester, whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673.[51] The Earl of Rochester, therefore, was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the Preface to Juvenal.

'The Assignation, or Love in a Nunnery,' a comedy (1673), was driven off the stage, *against the opinion*, as the author says, *of the best judges.* It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to Sir Charles Sedley, in which he finds an opportunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment and unreasonable censure.

[51] It was first printed in 1673, but first acted in 1672. "Nothing can make the town so fond of a man as a successful play."—STEELE: *Political Writings.* 12mo. 1715, p. 296.

'Amboyna' (1673) is a tissue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was perhaps written in less time than 'The Royal Martyr;' though the author thought not fit, either ostentatiously or mournfully, to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his Epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war in 1673.

'The State of Innocence and Fall of Man' (1674) is termed by him an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroic rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was foreseen by Marvel, who writes thus to Milton:—

> "Or if a work so infinite be spann'd,
> Jealous I was, that some less skilful hand
> (Such as disquiet always what is well,
> And by ill imitating would excel)
> Might hence presume the whole creation's day,
> To change in scenes, and show it in a play."

It is another of his hasty productions; for the heat of his imagination raised it in a month.

This composition is addressed to the Princess of Modena, then Duchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it was wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroic verse and poetic licence; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was never acted cannot be overpassed:—"I was induced to it in my own defence, many hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad without my knowledge or consent; so that every one gathering new

faults, it became at length a libel against me." These copies, as they gathered faults, were apparently manuscript; and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines were likely to be transcribed. An author has a right to print his own works, and need not seek an apology in falsehood; but he that could bear to write the dedication felt no pain in writing the preface.

'Aureng Zebe' (1676) is a tragedy founded on the actions of a great prince then reigning, but over nations not likely to employ their critics upon the transactions of the English stage. If he had known and disliked his own character, our trade was not in those times secure from his resentment. His country is at such a distance, that the manners might be safely falsified, and the incidents feigned; for the remoteness of place is remarked by Racine to afford the same conveniences to a poet as length of time.

This play is written in rhyme, and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial; but the dialogue is often domestic, and therefore susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life [52] is celebrated, and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the Earl of Mulgrave, afterwards Duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a poet, yet a writer of verses, and a critic. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epic poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to Juvenal. "The subject," says he, "you know is great, the story English, and neither too far distant from the present age, nor too near approaching it."

'All for Love, or the World well lost' (1678), a tragedy founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, "is the only play which he wrote for himself;" the rest were

[52] Act iv. sc. 1. See Boswell by Croker, p. 218.
The reply of Nourmahal I never heard anybody mention except Dr. Johnson. —Davies: *Dram. Miscellanies*, iii. 160.

given to the people. It is by universal consent accounted the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that, by admitting the romantic omnipotence of love, he has recommended, as laudable and worthy of imitation, that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vicious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topics of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and sprightliness.

'The Kind Keeper, or Mr. Limberham' (1678), is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence was in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted. Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to;[53] but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it "so much exposed the keeping part of the town."[54]

'Œdipus' (1679) is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.[55]

'Troilus and Cressida' (1679) is a play altered from Shakespeare; but so altered that, even in Langbaine's opinion, "the

[53] It was intended for an honest satire against our crying sin of *keeping*; how it would have succeeded I can but guess, for it was permitted to be acted only thrice.—DRYDEN: *Dedication to Lord Vaughan.*

[54] In this play (which I take to be the best comedy of his) he so much exposed the keeping part of the town, that the play was stopt when it had but thrice appeared on the stage; but the author took a becoming care that the things that offended on the stage were either altered or omitted in the press. —LANGBAINE, p. 164.

This comedy is, I believe, yet extant in its original state; for some years ago I saw a manuscript copy of it which had been found by Lord Bolingbroke among the sweepings of Pope's study, in which a pen had been drawn through several exceptionable passages that do not appear in the printed play.—MALONE: *Life of Dryden*, p. 118.

[55] I writ the first and third acts of 'Œdipus,' and drew the scenery of the whole play.—DRYDEN: *Vindication of the Duke of Guise.* See Appendix A. p. 392.

last scene in the third act is a masterpiece." It is introduced by a discourse on 'The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy,' to which I suspect that Rymer's book [56] had given occasion.

The 'Spanish Friar' (1681) is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the Papists, it would naturally at that time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the public.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternative of comic and tragic scenes, and that it is necessary to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the pressure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilsome passions. "Whoever," says he, "cannot perform both parts, *is but half a poet for the stage.*"

The 'Duke of Guise,' a tragedy (1683), written in conjunction with Lee, as 'Œdipus' had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the Court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though at last he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were to join in writing a play; and "he happened," says Dryden, "to claim the performance of that promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite before the undertaking of a second task. *Two*-thirds of it belonged to him; and to me only the first scene of the play, the whole fourth act, and the first half, or somewhat more, of the fifth."

This was a play written professedly for the party of the Duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England; and this intention produced the controversy.

[56] On the Tragedies of the last Age, 1678.

'Albion and Albanius' (1685) is a musical drama or opera, written, like the 'Duke of Guise,' against the Republicans. With what success it was performed, I have not found.[57]

'Don Sebastian' (1690) is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatic performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without sallies of frantic dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comic; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramatic poetry.[58]

'Amphitryon' is a comedy derived from Plautus and Molière. The dedication is dated Oct. 1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance, and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

'King Arthur' (1691) is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited.[59] In the dedication to the Marquis of Halifax, there is a very elegant character of Charles, and a

[57] In Anno 1685, the opera of 'Albion and Albanius' was performed; wrote by Mr. Dryden, and composed by Monsieur Grabu; this being performed on a very unlucky day, being the day the Duke of Monmouth landed in the west, the nation being in a great consternation, it was performed but six times, which not answering half the charge they were at, involved the company very much in debt.—DOWNES: *Roscius Anglicanus*, 12mo. 1708, p. 40.

The first night was the 6th June, 1685.

[58] The Earl of Dorset was pleased to read the tragedy [Don Sebastian] twice over before it was acted, and did me the favour to send me word that I had written beyond any of my former plays.—DRYDEN.

[59] I have here omitted the words, "and it does not seem to have been ever brought upon the stage"—and for two reasons—the fact stated is not true, and Johnson in the next sentence but one (an after addition) contradicts his own statement.

pleasing account of his latter life. When this was first brought upon the stage, news that the Duke of Monmouth had landed was told in the theatre; upon which the company departed, and 'Arthur' was exhibited no more.[60]

'Cleomenes' (April 1692) is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in 'The Guardian' [No. 45], and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy stripling: "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That, Sir," said Dryden, "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you that you are no hero."

His last drama was 'Love Triumphant,' a tragi-comedy.[61] In his dedication to the Earl of Salisbury he mentions "the lowness of fortune to which he has so voluntarily reduced himself, and of which he has no reason to be ashamed."

This play appeared in 1694.[62] It is said to have been unsuccessful. The catastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatic labours with ill success.

From such a number of theatrical pieces it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his fortune; at least, that such diligence with such abilities must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A

[60] This last paragraph is an addition and an error. Johnson has applied to 'King Arthur' what is true of 'Albion and Albanius.'

[61] Love Triumphant, or Nature will Prevail. From Dryden's letters to Walsh (first printed by Mr. Robert Bell) it appears that he meditated a different title, viz., Love Triumphant, or Neither side to Blame.

[62] 11th January, 1693-4. Supped at Mr. Edward Sheldon's, where was Mr. Dryden the poet, who now intended to write no more plays, being intent on his translation of his 'Virgil.' He read to us his prologue and epilogue to his valedictory play now shortly to be acted.—Evelyn.

Malone had fixed the representation of Dryden's valedictory play in December 1693;—Scott (p. 310), correcting Malone, fixed it (we see how erroneously) in 1692.

grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the audience, were not great; and the poet had for a long time but a single night. The first that had two nights was Southerne; and the first that had three was Rowe.[63] There were, however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play therefore seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.[64]

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have made flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his

[63] *Player.* There is an old tradition
That in the times of mighty Tamburlane,
Of conjuring Faustus and the Beauchamps bold,
You poets us'd to have the *second day.*

DAVENANT: *The Play-house to be Let.*

Mr. Dryden complaining to the Company of his want of profit, the Company was so kind to him that they not only did not press him for the plays which he so engaged to write for them, and for which he was paid beforehand, but they did also, at his earnest request, give him a *third day* for his last new play, called 'All for Love;' and at the receipt of the money of the said *third day* he acknowledged it as a gift, and a particular kindness of the Company.—*Memorial from the King's Players to the Lord Chamberlain,* cir. 1678.

And thus some sharply write for a *third day,*
And some for Sunday's pudding preach and pray.

CARYL: *Prol. to Sir Salomon,* 1671, 4to.

Shadwell received 130*l.* for the *third day* of 'The Squire of Alsatia' (Downes, p. 41), who adds, "which was the greatest receipt they ever had at Drury-Lane at single prices." Southerne in the Dedication to 'Sir Antony Love' (1691) records his interest in the third and sixth representations. Farquhar in the preface to his 'Inconstant' (1702) speaks of his sixth night, and Pope commemorates in 'The Dunciad' "warm third days," and "thin third days."

[64] A "warm" third night cleared about sixty guineas—the 'Dedication' seldom brought more than the customary fee of twenty guineas; and the highest copy money for a play received by Dryden appears to have been thirty guineas. This he had in 1692 for 'Cleomenes.'

work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning then almost new in the English language, and which he who had considered with great accuracy the principles of writing was able to distribute copiously, as occasions arose. By these dissertations the public judgment must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates [65] that he regretted the success of his own instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till, being asked to write one for Mr. Southerne, he demanded three: "Not," said he, "young man, out of disrespect to you, but the players have had my goods too cheap." [66]

Though he declares, that in his own opinion his genius was not dramatic,[67] he had great confidence in his own fertility;

[65] The word *relates* seems to refer to some passage in Swift's printed works, but I have in vain sought for any such observation in his very miscellaneous volumes. That Dryden regretted the success of his instructions, not in any of his printed pieces, but in conversation with Swift, was certainly Dr. Johnson's notion by his adding "who conversed with Dryden."—MALONE: *Life of Dryden*, p. 240.

[66] According to Warburton (Note in Pope) the rise was from *four* to *six* guineas; according to Shiels and the younger Cibber (*Lives*, v. 328) from *five* to *ten* guineas. Malone agrees (*Life*, p. 456) with Johnson's rise from *two* to *three*; and Sir Walter Scott, after (p. 253) adopting *five* and *ten*, says (p. 433), "But I am convinced the sum is exaggerated, and incline now to believe, with Dr. Johnson, that the advance was from *two* to *three* guineas only." I have looked into this subject very carefully, and am convinced that Johnson is right. That Southerne raised the price "of Prologues and of Plays" we have the testimony in verse of Pope, in a passage sadly misquoted by Shiels and the younger Cibber in the very page in which occurs the fact they chronicle about the rise from *five* to ten guineas. Let me add here that by far the fullest, and therefore best collection of Dryden's Prologues and Epilogues is to be found in Mr. Robert Bell's edition of Dryden's Poems, 3 vols., 12mo., 1854.

[67] I confess my chief endeavours are to delight the age in which I live. If the humour of this be for low comedy, small accidents and raillery, I will force my genius to obey it, though with more reputation I could write in verse. I know I am not fitted by nature to write comedy; I want that gaiety of humour which is required to it. My conversation is slow and dull, my humour saturnine and reserved; in short I am none of those who endeavour to break jests in company, or make repartees. So that those who decry my comedies do me no injury except it be in point of profit: reputation in them is the last thing to which I shall pretend.—DRYDEN: *Defence of Essay*, 1668.

for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a-year.[68]

It is certain that in one year, 1678, he published 'All for Love,' 'Assignation,' two parts of the 'Conquest of Granada,' 'Sir Martin Marr-all,' and the 'State of Innocence,' six complete plays;[69] with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shows such facility of composition, such readiness of language, and such copiousness of sentiment, as since the name of Lopez de Vega perhaps no other author has ever possessed.[70]

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however small, without molestation. He had critics to endure, and rivals to oppose. The two most distinguished wits of the nobility, the Duke of Buckingham and Earl of Rochester, declared themselves his enemies.

Buckingham characterised him, in 1671, by the name of Bayes, in the 'Rehearsal;' a farce which he is said to have written with the assistance of Butler, the author of 'Hudibras,' Martin Clifford of the Charter House, and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chaplain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time and the number of hands employed upon

[68] Only three, and even this he did not fulfil. This fact is derived from the curious undated memorial to the Lord Chamberlain from the actors at the King's House: printed in Malone and Scott, and reprinted as Appendix A to this Memoir.

[69] Of the "six complete plays" here said to have been "published" in 1678, only one appeared for the first time in that year. The six were first published in the following years:—

All for Love	1678
Assignation	1673
Conquest of Granada, Part I. . . .	1672
,, ,, Part II. . . .	
Sir Martin Marr-all	1668
The State of Innocence	1674

Johnson was misled by Langbaine.

[70] Between the beginning of the year 1667, and the middle of the year 1670, Dryden produced five original plays, and two in which he was aided by others: 'The Maiden Queen,' 'The Tempest,' 'Sir Martin Marr-all,' 'The Mock Astrologer,' 'Tyrannick Love,' or the 'Royal Martyr,' and the two parts of the 'Conquest of Granada,' and this appears to have been the period of his greatest dramatic exertion.—MALONE, p. 92.

this performance;[71] in which, though by some artifice of action it yet keeps possession of the stage, it is not possible now to find anything that might not have been written without so long delay, or a confederacy so numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary history is tedious and troublesome: it requires, indeed, no great force of understanding, but often depends upon inquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The 'Rehearsal' was played in [December] 1671,[72] and yet is represented as ridiculing passages in the 'Conquest of Granada'[73] and 'Assignation,' which were not published till 1678, in 'Marriage-à-la-Mode,' published in 1673, and in 'Tyrannick Love,' in 1677. These contradictions show how rashly satire is applied.[74]

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who in the first draught was characterised by the name of Bilboa. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in the 'Rehearsal' still remaining which seems to have related originally to Davenant. Bayes

[71] The character of Zimri in my 'Absalom' is in my opinion worth the whole poem: it is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough: and he for whom it was intended was too witty to resent it as an injury. If I had railed, I might have suffered for it justly: but I managed my own work more happily, perhaps more dexterously. I avoided the mention of great crimes, and applied myself to the representing of blind-sides and little extravagances; to which the wittier a man is, he is generally the more obnoxious. It succeeded as I wished; the jest went round, and he was laughed at in his turn who began the frolic.—Dryden.

[72] 14th Dec., 1671. Went to see the Duke of Buckingham's ridiculous farce and rhapsody, called 'The Recital,' buffooning all plays, and yet profane enough.—Evelyn.

[73] 'The Conquest of Granada' was published in 1672, 'The Assignation' in 1673, 'Marriage à-la-Mode' in the same year, and 'Tyrannick Love' in 1670. See Appendix C, p. 394.

[74] 'Tyrannick Love' and 'The Conquest of Granada' appeared before 'The Rehearsal'—'Marriage à-la-Mode' and 'Assignation' about the same time. "In truth," says Malone, "there is no contradiction whatsoever, for these seeming difficulties all arise from his [Johnson] having confided in Langbaine's erroneous account of the dates of our author's plays, and his not knowing that various alterations and *additions* were made to 'The Rehearsal' after its original publication."—Malone: *Life of Dryden*, p. 100.

hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise: how this affected Dryden does not appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said likewise that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.[75]

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. Bayes probably imitated the dress and mimicked the manner of Dryden: the cant words which are so often in his mouth may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases or customary exclamations. Bayes, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There were other strokes in the 'Rehearsal' by which malice was gratified; the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps Prince Volscius in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the misconduct of the Duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a mistress.

The Earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the public that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation: his 'Empress of Morocco,' having [1673] first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical meteor at the highest; the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, "to have a judgment contrary to that of the town;" perhaps being unable to endure

[75] Unquestionably, and this continued a stage custom with 'The Rehearsal' long after Dryden's death, and was even made the means of annoying Pope. "To the character of Bayes," says Cibber in his letter to Mr. Pope, "there had always been allowed such ludicrous liberties of observation upon anything new or remarkable in the state of the stage as Mr. Bayes might think proper to make." Cibber therefore in acting Bayes (and it was one of his famous characters) "had a fling" at the 'Three Hours of Marriage.' This fling, as Cibber himself relates, gave him his first place in the deathless satire of Pope, who had at least one finger in the unfortunate 'Three Hours after Marriage.'

any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.[76]

Neither critics nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smarts of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamantine confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for though he was perhaps sometimes injuriously censured, he would, by denying part of the charge, have confessed the rest; and, as his adversaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left, in that perplexity which it generally produces, a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer, from about thirty-five to sixty-three, may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the

[76] For wits are treated just like common whores;
First they 're enjoy'd and then kick'd out of doors.

LORD ROCHESTER: *A Satire against Mankind.*

"In behalf of all the lovers of poetry I return you thanks for the protection and patronage of a great man deceased. 'Tis known to all the observing world that you generously began to espouse him when he was more than half oppressed by a very formidable party in the court of King Charles II.—a faction that wanted neither power nor authority to crush him, who, besides that they held the foremost rank in the state, had got possession of the minds of the people, with whom they had acquired a great reputation for their knowledge and capacity in matters of wit and criticism. If that great man had faults, your lordship wanted no discernment to find them; but you wanted malice, partiality, prejudice, and the rest of those ungenerous obstacles that hindered them from discovering or confessing his beauties. Your lordship easily found that he had beauties which overweighed all his faults, and it was that consideration that engaged you to support him against his powerful adversaries. They, upon an unaccountable dislike which they had taken to his person, would have oppressed his growing merit; your lordship in consideration of that rare merit cherished his person," &c.—DENNIS: *Dedication to Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, of the Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry.*

composition of eight-and-twenty pieces [77] for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for, in 1679, a paper of verses, called 'An Essay on Satire,' was shown about in manuscript, by which the Earl of Rochester, the Duchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked that, as was supposed (for the actors were never discovered), they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be [18th Dec., 1679] waylaid and beaten.[78] This incident is mentioned by the Duke of Buckinghamshire, the true writer, in his 'Essay on Poetry,' where he says of Dryden,

> "Though prais'd and punish'd for another's rhymes,
> His own deserve as great applause sometimes."[79]

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[77] In this enumeration Johnson includes the 'Indian Queen,' in which he had only a half share, if so much.

[78] I have sent you herewith a libel, in which my own share is not the least; the King having perused it, is no ways dissatisfied with his: the author is apparent, Mr. ——, his patron, my Lord ——, having a panegyrick in the midst.—*Lord Rochester to Henry Saville* (Familiar Letters published by S. Briscoe), 12mo., 1697, vol. i. p. 48.

You write me word that I am out of favour with a certain poet whom I have ever admired for the disproportion of him and his attributes; he is a rarity which I cannot but be fond of, as one would be of a dog that could fiddle, or a singing owl. If he falls upon me at the Blunt, which is his very good weapon in wit, I will forgive him, if you please, and leave the repartee to Black Will with a cudgel.—*Lord Rochester to Henry Saville* (Familiar Letters published by S. Briscoe), 12mo., 1697, vol. i. p. 5.

Last night Mr. Dryden, the famous poet, going from a coffee-house in Covent Garden, was set upon by three persons unknown to him, and so rudely by them handled, that, as it is said, his life is in no small danger. It is thought to have been the effect of private grudge rather than upon the too common design of unlawful gain; an unkind trespass by which not only he himself but the commonwealth of learning may receive an injury.—*Newspaper of 19th Nov.*, 1679. (Malone's 'Life,' p. 323.)

Whereas John Dreyden, Esq., was on Thursday the 18th inst., at night, barbarously assaulted and wounded in Rose-street, in Covent Garden, by diverse men unknown: if any person shall make discovery of the said offenders to the said Mr. Dreyden, or to any Justice of the Peace, he shall not only receive fifty pounds, which is deposited in the hands of Mr. Blanchard, goldsmith, next door to Temple Bar, for the said purpose, but if he be a principal or an accessory in the said fact, his Majesty is graciously pleased to promise him his pardon for the same.—*London Gazette*, No. 1472. Dec. 29, 1679.

[79] This couplet (omitted in the reprint of the poem in the Duke's Works, it is thought by the advice of Pope) occurs in the reprint of the 'Essay' in a Collec-

His reputation in time was such that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the 'Life of Polybius' to the translation of Sir Henry Shere, and those of Lucian and Plutarch to versions of their works by different hands. Of the English 'Tacitus' he translated the first book; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without some degree of indignation; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the public, and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the 'Epistles of Ovid' being translated by the poets of the time, among which one was the work of Dryden, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave,[80] it was necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holyday had fixed the judgment of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Fanshaw,[81] Denham, Waller, and Cowley had tried to give examples of a different practice.[82]

tion of Poems, 8vo., 1701, and at the end of Lord Roscommon's 'Poems,' printed by Tonson, 8vo., 1717, where it is said (Preface), "with the leave and with the corrections of the author." In the ed. of 1701 the note to the couplet is 'A libel for which he was both applauded and wounded, though entirely innocent of the whole matter.' In the reprint, at the end of Roscommon (p. 307), the information is still more precise: 'A copy of verses called An Essay on Satire, for which Mr. Dryden was both applauded and beaten, though not only innocent but ignorant of the whole matter.'

[80] Two were by Dryden, and one by Dryden and Lord Mulgrave. Johnson repeats the same error at p. 361.

[81] He might have added Fairfax.

[82] There is undoubtedly a mean to be preserved. Dryden saw very early

In [November] 1681 Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politics with poetry in the memorable satire called 'Absalom and Achitophel,'[83] written against the faction which, by Lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the Duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of public principles, and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me he had not known it equalled but by Sacheverell's trial.[84]

The reason of this general perusal Addison[85] has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decipher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to inquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of

that closeness best preserved an author's sense, and that freedom best exhibited his spirit; he therefore will deserve the highest praise who can give a representation at once faithful and pleasing, who can convey the same thoughts with the same graces, and who, when he translates, changes nothing but the language.—JOHNSON: *Idler*, No. 69.

[83] 'Absalom and Achitophel. A Poem. London: printed for J. T., and are to be sold by W. Davis, in Amen-Corner,' 1681, fol. pp. 32. . . . A fourth ed. "augmented and revised" appeared in 1682, a seventh "augmented and revised" in 1692, and a tenth in folio, 1701.

[84] The plan of 'Absalom and Achitophel' was not new to the public. A Catholic poet had, in 1679, paraphrased the Scriptural story of Naboth's Vineyard, and applied it to the condemnation of Lord Stafford on account of the Popish Plot. This poem is written in the style of a Scriptural allusion; the names and situations of personages in the holy text being applied to those contemporaries to whom the author assigned a place in his piece. Neither was the obvious application of the story of 'Absalom and Achitophel' to the persons of Monmouth and Shaftesbury first made by our poet. A prose paraphrase, published in 1680, had already been composed upon this allusion. But the vigour of the satire, the happy adaptation, not only of the incidents but of the very names, to the individuals characterised, gave Dryden's poem the full effect of novelty.—SIR WALTER SCOTT: *Misc. Prose Works*, vol. i. p. 208.

[85] Addison has no where, that I can find, expressly mentioned the poem of 'Absalom and Achitophel;' I suppose therefore Dr. Johnson alluded to the 567th paper of the 'Spectator,' on the art of rendering party-writings "more taking than ordinary" by printing initial letters instead of proper names, or omitting all the vowels in a great man's name, which last method is said to have been introduced by Tom Brown "of facetious memory."—MALONE: *Prose Works of Dryden*, ii. 292.

wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed in their turns to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well pointed nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood.

One of these poems is called 'Dryden's Satire to his Muse,' ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to Somers, who was afterwards chancellor. The poem, whosesoever it was,[86] has much virulence, and some sprightliness. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of 'Absalom and Achitophel' had two answers,[87] now both forgotten—one called 'Azaria and Hushai,' the other 'Absalom Senior' [or 'Achitophel transposed'], a poem. Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes 'Absalom Senior' to Settle, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. 'Azaria and Hushai' was, as Wood says, imputed to him, though it is somewhat unlikely that he should write twice on the same occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical transactions.[88]

The same year [in March 1681-2] he published 'The Medal,' of which the subject is a medal struck on Lord Shaftesbury's escape from a prosecution by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

[86] The author has never been discovered (Malone, p. 165). That Somers was not the author may be fairly assumed from the fact of his contributing a translation of one of Ovid's Epistles (Dido to Æneas) to the translation of 1680 known as Dryden's 'Ovid.'

[87] More than two. See ample accounts of them in Malone and Scott.

[88] Dr. Johnson was right in his conjecture, for it appears from Mr. Luttrell's copy that 'Azaria' was the production of Samuel Pordage, a dramatic writer of that time, author of two original plays, and a third translated from Seneca, whose scurrility in this piece procured him some months afterwards the honour of a single couplet from Dryden's pen ('Abs. and Ach.,' Part II.):—

> Some in my speedy pace I must outrun,
> As *lame Mephibosheth* the wizard's son.

MALONE: *Life of Dryden*, p. 160.

In both poems he maintains the same principles, and saw them both attacked by the same antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered 'Absalom,' appeared with equal courage in opposition to the 'Medal,' and published an answer called 'The Medal Reversed,'[89] with so much success in both encounters, that he left the palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them, who died forgotten in an hospital, and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same,[90] to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding, might with truth have had inscribed upon his stone,

"Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of Dryden."

Settle was, for his rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden under the name of Doeg, in the second part of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyric on the virtues of Judge Jefferies; and what more could have been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates, would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that, as Dryden's genius was commonly

[89] 'The Medal Reversed, a Satyre against Persecution,' by the author of 'Azaria and Hushai,' was not by Settle, but by Pordage. (See Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 165.) The chief opposition to the 'Medal' is not noticed by Johnson, viz., 'The Medal of John Bayes: A Satyr against Folly and Knavery,' 1682, 4to., the production of no less a person than Shadwell (Malone, p. 165).

[90] I have several of these presentation copies, and have seen many more. All are in costly bindings of Settle's period, just as they left the hands of the poor expectant poet.

excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topic.

Soon after the accession of King James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir Kenelm Digby embraced popery; the two Reynolds reciprocally converted one another; and Chillingworth himself was a while so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties or such motives, as may either unite them to the church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never inquired why he was a Protestant,[91] should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a Papist, overborne by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shows only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and, as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was the then state of Popery; every artifice was used to show it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an

[91] I suspect his [Dryden's] wife had long been a Papist: her brother Charles, the second Earl of Berkshire, certainly was one.—Malone's *Life of Dryden*, p. 189.

elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right, than virtue to maintain it. But inquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his Judge.[92]

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him (1686) to defend the controversial papers found in the strong-box of Charles the Second, and what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.[93]

With hopes of promoting Popery,[94] he was employed to translate Maimbourg's 'History of the League,' which he published [1684] with a large introduction.[95] His name is likewise prefixed [1688] to the English 'Life of Francis Xavier;' but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which, however, seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.[96]

[92] Conscience is the royalty and prerogative of every private man. He is absolute in his own breast, and accountable to no earthly power for that which passes only between God and him.—DRYDEN: *Preface to the Hind and the Panther.*

The reader who would pursue the subject thus admirably handled by Johnson should consult Scott's 'Life of Dryden;' Southey's 'Life of Cowper,' ii. 131; and Macaulay's 'History.' Both Scott and Southey acquit Dryden of being biassed by motives of temporary convenience; but Mr. Macaulay is painfully positive that his conversion was a mere money-matter.

[93] I refer myself to the judgment of those who have read the 'Answer to the Defence of the late King's Papers,' and that of the Duchess (in which last I was concerned), how charitably I have been represented there.—DRYDEN: *Preface to the Hind and the Panther.*

From this it is clear that only a third of the 'Defence' is by Dryden.

[94] Not so much with the hopes of promoting Popery (which Dr. Johnson supposed) as to show that the Sectaries and the Long Parliament, in their solemn Covenant, had the French Leaguers in view; and that all the disciples of Calvin, to the hundredth generation, must continue to hate monarchy and love democracy.—MALONE'S *Life of Dryden*, p. 186, *and Note to Dedication.*

[95] This translation he undertook at the express desire of Charles II.; and it was published 1684, while that King was yet alive, and therefore prior to his own avowed conversion. The translation is dedicated to Charles II. See MALONE, pp. 185-6.

[96] Tonson has placed the name of Dryden on the title-page of the English

The version of 'Xavier's Life' is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the Queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate 'Varillas's History of Heresies;'[97] and, when Burnet published remarks upon it, to have written an 'Answer;'[98] upon which Burnet makes the following observation:—

"I have been informed from England, that a gentleman who is known both for poetry and other things had spent three months in translating M. Varillas's 'History;' but that as soon as my 'Reflections' appeared he discontinued his labour, finding the credit of his author was gone. Now, if he thinks it is recovered by his 'Answer,'[99] he [Dryden] will perhaps go on with his translation; and this may be, for aught I know, as good an entertainment for him as the conversation that he had set on between the Hinds and Panthers, and all the rest of animals, for whom M. Varillas may serve well enough for an author: and this history and that poem are such extraordinary things of their kind, that it will be but suitable to see the author of the worst poem become likewise the translator of the worst history that the age has produced. If his grace and his wit improve both proportionably, he will hardly find that he has gained much by the change he has made, from having no religion, to choose one of the worst. It is true, he had something to sink from in matter of wit; but as for his morals, it is scarce possible for him to grow a worse man than he was. He has lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling his three

'Life of Francis Xavier,'—sufficient proof that the 'Life' was recognised by Dryden.

[97] That Dryden had undertaken such a task Malone discovered from an entry in the Stationers' Register, recorded 29th April, 1686, by Jacob Tonson, to the effect that a translation of Varillas had been made by Dryden by the King's command. The translation, however, was never published.

[98] Johnson is in error in supposing that Dryden replied to Burnet's 'Reflections' on Varillas. The 'Answer' to Burnet was by Varillas himself. Dryden had nothing to do *publicly* with Varillas or his History.

[99] If Johnson had printed a preceding paragraph in Burnet, he and his readers would have seen that *his* 'Answer' meant Varillas, not Dryden, as here given.

months' labour; but in it he has done me all the honour that any man can receive from him, which is to be railed at by him. If I had ill-nature enough to prompt me to wish a very bad wish for him, it should be, that he would go on and finish his translation. By that it will appear whether the English nation, which is the most competent judge in this matter, has, upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in M. Varillas's favour or in mine. It is true, Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but at least it will serve to keep him in from other extravagances; and if he gains little honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so much by it as he has done by his last employment." [100]

Having probably felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony united are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated, therefore, by zeal for Rome, or hope of fame, he published [April, 1687] the 'Hind and the Panther,' a poem, in which the Church of Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets against the Church of England, represented by the *Panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking theology appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the 'Country Mouse' and the 'City Mouse,' a parody, written by Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.[101]

The conversion of such a man at such a time was not likely

[100] 'A Defence of the Reflections on the Ninth Book of the First Volume of M. Varillas' History of Heresies; being a Reply to his Answer.' 12mo. Amsterdam, 1687.

[101] You have a war in England between the Hind and the Panther. General Dryden is an expert captain; but I always thought him fitter for execution than for counsel. Who commands the Panther forces I know not. The author of 'The Revolter,' while he endeavours to expose the morals of his enemy, exposes more his own dulness by his poetry. The gentleman who has transversed the poem shows that the genius of the 'Rehearsal' is not dead with the Duke of Bucks.—Sir George Etherege: *MS. Letter Book in Brit. Mus., Add. MS.* 11,513.

to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious Thomas Brown, of which the two first were called 'Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his Religion;' and the third, 'The Reasons of Mr. Haynes the Player's Conversion and Re-conversion.' The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the public attention.

In the two first dialogues Bayes is brought into the company of Crites and Eugenius, with whom he had formerly debated on dramatic poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. Bayes and Mr. Haynes.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow*, and therefore laid out his powers upon small jests or gross buffoonery, so that his performances have little intrinsic value, and were read only while they were recommended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited.[102] One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden *little* Bayes. Ajax, who happens to be mentioned, is "he that wore as many cowhides upon his shield as would have furnished half the King's army with shoe-leather."

Being asked whether he had seen the 'Hind and the Panther,' Crites answers: "Seen it! Mr. Bayes, why, I can stir nowhere but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a bandbox, when my laundress brings home my linen; sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunkmaker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort, Mr. Bayes, I have not only

[102] These Dialogues were Brown's first productions; and are said by his editor to be those pieces to which he owed the reputation he afterwards obtained.

seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise 'The Worth of a Penny' to his extravagant 'prentice, that revels in cock-ale, stewed apples, and penny custards."

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. "To secure one's chastity," says Bayes, "little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a wise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be to a fanatic parson to be forbid seeing 'The Cheats' and 'The Committee,' or for my Lord Mayor and aldermen to be interdicted the sight of 'The London Cuckolds.'" This is the general strain, and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: "You began," says Crites to Bayes, "a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a tyrant's quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpation of the Hind."

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination, and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity—predictions of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of Popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A Papist now could be no longer laureate.[103] The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed, but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the in-

[103] Or even historiographer.

truder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called 'Mac Flecknoe'[104]—of which the 'Dunciad,' as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior,[105] that Lord Dorset, when as chamberlain he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allowance equal to the salary.[106] This is no romantic or incredible act of generosity; a hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a public infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune.[107] His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but, if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

[104] Here is an error. 'Mac Flecknoe' was published in 1682 (4to. London: printed for D. Green, 1682); and again in 1684 in Tonson's first 'Miscellany,' and on both occasions while Dryden was himself Laureate. 'Mac Flecknoe' originated in Shadwell's two anonymous attacks on Dryden, 'The Medal of John Bayes,' 1682, 4to., and 'The Tory Poets,' 1682, 4to. Dryden's dislike to Flecknoe had its origin, I suspect, in a pamphlet, signed 'R. F.' (evidently Richard Flecknoe), written in vindication of Sir Robert Howard. See my paper on this subject in 'Gent.'s Mag.' for December, 1850. This curious pamphlet was unknown to Johnson, Malone, and Scott.

[105] When, as Lord Chamberlain, he was obliged to take the King's pension from Mr. Dryden, who had long before put himself out of a possibility of receiving any favour from the Court, my Lord allowed him an equivalent out of his own estate. However displeased with the conduct of his old acquaintance, he relieved his necessities; and while he gave him his assistance in private, in public he extenuated and pitied his error.—PRIOR: *Dedication of his Poems to Lord Dorset's Son.*

[106] But the loss to Dryden by the Revolution was *more* than 100*l.* a-year. He lost 300*l.* a-year, his butt of Canary, and his place in the Customs. Prior says (in the passage quoted above) that the "equivalent" allowed by Lord Dorset was for the "King's pension," *i. e.* if Prior has used the expression correctly; 100*l.* a-year for the laureateship, and 100*l.* a-year for the office of Historiographer; for the extra sum of 100*l.* a-year (the additional pension granted by Charles II., and confirmed by his brother) was not paid by the Lord Chamberlain; and Prior refers only to the emoluments of which Lord Dorset as Chamberlain was at the Revolution obliged to deprive him.

[107] I have seldom answered any scurrilous lampoon when it was in my power to have exposed my enemies; and being naturally vindicative, have suffered in silence, and possessed my soul in quiet.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of Juvenal,* 1693.

During the short reign of King James, he had written nothing for the stage,[108] being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might perhaps have been less lavish without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the public, or perhaps expecting a second Revolution, he produced 'Don Sebastian' in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693[109] appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius. Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires; and of Persius the whole work. On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the public, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface in the form of a dedication to Lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epic poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epic as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The surprises and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of Pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes, and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken, with this incurable defect, that in a contest between heaven and hell we know at the beginning

[108] 'Albion and Albanius' excepted.

[109] No; in Sept. 1692.

which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war, justice can be but on one side; and, to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he must fight in defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers, and enlarged our language; and might perhaps have contributed by pleasing instructions to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a public stipend, was not likely in these times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged [110] Blackmore with stealing; only, says he, "The guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage." [111]

In 1694 he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's Art of Painting into English prose. The preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind stored like his no labour to produce them.

In July [1697] he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the Lord Clifford, the Georgics to the Earl of Chesterfield,[112] and the Æneid to the Earl of Mulgrave. This economy of flattery, at once lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.[113]

[110] Preface to Fables, 1700. [111] Ibid.

[112] See Appendix B, for Dryden's recently published Correspondence with Lord Chesterfield.

[113] Last for myself I have undertaken to translate all Virgil, and as an Essay have already paraphrased the third Georgic as an example. It will be pub-

This translation was censured [1698][114] by Milbourne, a clergyman,[115] styled, by Pope, "The Fairest of Critics," because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his Fables [fol. 1700], published in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson;[116] by which he obliged himself, in consideration of three hundred pounds, to finish for the press ten thousand verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,[117] which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch,[118] he spent a fortnight "in composing and correcting." But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose 'Equivoque,' a poem of only three hundred and forty-six lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it?

Part of this book of Fables is the first Iliad in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.[119]

lished in Tonson's next 'Miscellanies' in Hilary term. I propose to do it by subscription, having an hundred and two brass cuts with the coats of arms of the subscriber to each cut; every subscriber to pay five guineas, half in hand; besides another inferior subscription of two guineas, for the rest whose names are only written in a catalogue printed with the book.—DRYDEN *to* WALSH, *n.d.* (Robert Bell's 'Dryden,' vol. i.)

[114] Notes on Dryden's 'Virgil,' in a Letter to a Friend, with an Essay on the same Poet. By Mr. Milbourne. London: printed for R. Clavill, &c. 1698. In 1688 Milbourne published in quarto a translation of the first 'Æneid.'

[115] Pride, malice, folly, against Dryden rose,
In various shapes of parsons, critics, beaux:
But sense surviv'd when merry jests were past,
For rising merit will buoy up at last.
Might he return, and bless once more our eyes,
New Blackmores and new Milbournes must arise:
Nay, should great Homer lift his awful head,
Zoilus again would start up from the dead.

POPE: *Essay on Crit.*

[116] See *post*, p. 335, where the contract is printed.

[117] This 'Ode' was printed separately, in folio, 1697, Dec.

[118] By "the very learned and ingenious Richard Graham, Jun., Esq." The letter, it is believed, does not exist. See Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 286.

[119] It is a great loss to the poetical world that Mr. Dryden did not live to

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the 1st of May, 1700, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died in Gerard-street,[120] of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit,[121] are thus related, as I find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary.

"On the Wednesday morning following, being May-day, 1700, under the most excruciating dolours, he [Mr. Dryden] died. Dr. Sprat, then bishop of Rochester, sent the next day to Lady Elizabeth, that he would make a present of the ground,

translate the whole 'Iliad.' . . . Had he translated the whole work, I would no more have attempted Homer after him than Virgil.—POPE: *Preface to Iliad.*

It is said that Dryden once intended to translate the whole 'Iliad.' Taking this first book for a specimen, I am glad, both on Homer's account and on his own, that he did not. It is tainted throughout with a dash of burlesque, owing not only to his choice of words, but also to his paraphrases and additions, and with so much of the profane cant of his age, that if we were to judge of the poet by the translator, we should imagine the 'Iliad' to have been partly designed for a satire upon the clergy. Homer has been blamed, not without reason, for degrading his gods into mortals; but Dryden has degraded them into blackguards.—Dr. BEATTIE: *Essays on Poetry and Music*, p. 376.

[120] In the house now No. 43.

If either you or your lady shall at any time honour me with a letter, my house is in Gerard Street, the fifth door on the left hand, coming from Newport Street.—*Dryden to Elmes Steward, Esq.*

Dryden lived in Gerard Street, and used most commonly to write in the ground-room next the street.—POPE: in *Spence by Singer.*

From 1673 to 1682 he lived in the parish of St. Bride's, Fleet Street, on the water-side of the street, in or near Salisbury Court (Rate-Books of St. Bride's, Fleet Street); and from 1682 to 1686 in a house on the north side of Long-Acre, facing Rose Street, a narrow and circuitous (now a dirty) street, the scene of the barbarous assault upon him on the 18th December, 1679.

[121] The 'Life' is that "printed in the year 1730" for Curll, and which on the title-page is said to contain "some very curious Memoirs of Mr. Dryden and his family." It was written by Oldmixon and Curll, though said, on the title-page and elsewhere, to be the work of "Charles Wilson, Esq." If Johnson had consulted the original work, he would have seen that the "very curious Memoirs of Mr. Dryden and his family" "were communicated by a lady now living, with whom Mr. Dryden corresponded under the name of Corinna, and which name he himself gave her," *i. e.* Mrs. Thomas or "Curll's Corinna," as she is called by Pope, and therefore that the "wild story" was of very little credit.

which was 40*l.*, with all the other Abbey fees, &c., to his deceased friend. Lord Halifax sent also to my Lady and Mr. Charles, that, if they would give him leave to bury Mr. Dryden, he would inter him with a gentleman's private funeral, and afterwards bestow 500*l.* on a monument in the Abbey; which, as they had no reason to refuse, they accepted. On the Saturday following the company came; the corpse was put into a velvet hearse, and eighteen mourning-coaches filled with company attended; when, just before they began to move, Lord Jefferies,[122] with some of his rakish companions, coming by, in wine, asked whose funeral? and being told, 'What,' cries he, 'shall Dryden, the greatest honour and ornament of the nation, be buried after this private manner? No, gentlemen, let all that loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory, alight and join with me in gaining my Lady's consent to let me have the honour of his interment, which shall be after another manner than this; and I will bestow 1000*l.* on a monument in the Abbey for him.' The gentlemen in the coaches, not knowing of the Bishop of Rochester's favour, nor of the Lord Halifax's generous design (these two noble spirits having, out of respect to the family, enjoined Lady Elizabeth and her son to keep their favour concealed to the world, and let it pass for her own expense, &c.), readily came out of the coaches, and attended Lord Jefferies up to the lady's bedside, who was then sick: he repeated the purport of what he had before said; but she absolutely refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing never to rise till his request was granted. The rest of the company, by his desire, kneeled also; she, being naturally of a timorous disposition, and then under a sudden surprise, fainted away. As soon as she recovered her speech she cried, *No, no!* 'Enough, gentlemen,' replied he (rising briskly), 'my Lady is very good, she says, *Go, go!*' She repeated her former words with all her strength; but, alas, in vain! her feeble voice was lost in their acclamations of joy; and Lord Jefferies ordered the hearsemen to carry the corpse

[122] John, the second Lord Jefferies, and only son of the Chancellor. He was himself a writer of verse. He died in 1703. See Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 370.

to Russell's, an undertaker in Cheapside, and leave it there till he sent orders for the embalment, which, he added, should be after the royal manner. His directions were obeyed, the company dispersed, and Lady Elizabeth and Mr. Charles remained inconsolable. Next morning Mr. Charles waited on Lord Halifax, &c., to excuse his mother and himself, by relating the real truth. But neither his Lordship nor the Bishop would admit of any plea; especially the latter, who had the Abbey lighted, the ground opened, the choir attending, an anthem ready set, and himself waiting for some hours without any corpse to bury. Russell, after three days' expectance of orders for embalment without receiving any, waits on Lord Jefferies; who, pretending ignorance of the matter, turned it off with an ill-natured jest, saying, those who observed the orders of a drunken frolic deserved no better; that he remembered nothing at all of it; and that he might do what he pleased with the corpse. On this, Mr. Russell waits on the Lady Elizabeth and Mr. Dryden; but alas! it was not in their power to answer. The season was very hot, the deceased had lived high and fast, and, being corpulent and abounding with gross humours, grew very offensive. The undertaker, in short, threatened to bring the corpse home and set it before their door. It cannot be easily imagined what grief, shame, and confusion seized this unhappy family. They begged a day's respite, which was granted. Mr. Charles wrote a very handsome letter to Lord Jefferies, who returned it with this cool answer:—'He knew nothing of the matter, and would be troubled no more about it.' He then addressed the Lord Halifax and Bishop of Rochester, who were both too justly, though unhappily, incensed to do anything in it. In this distress, Dr. Garth, a man who entirely loved Mr. Dryden, and was withal a man of generosity and great humanity, sent for the corpse to the College of Physicians, in Warwick Lane, and proposed a funeral by subscription, to which himself set a most noble example: Mr. Wycherley, and several others, among whom must not be forgotten Henry Cromwell, Esq., Captain Gibbons, and Mr. Christopher Metcalfe (Mr. Dryden's apothecary and intimate friend, since a collegiate physician), who

with many others contributed most largely to the subscription; and at last a day, about three weeks after his decease, was appointed for the interment at the Abbey. Dr. Garth pronounced a fine Latin oration over the corpse at the college; but the audience being numerous, and the room large, it was requisite the orator should be elevated that he might be heard; but, as it unluckily happened, there was nothing at hand but an old beer-barrel, which the Doctor with much good-nature mounted; and, in the midst of his oration, beating time to the accent with his foot, the head broke in and his feet sunk to the bottom, which occasioned the malicious report of his enemies that he was turned Tub-Preacher: however, he finished the oration with a superior grace, to the loud acclamations of mirth which inspired the mixed, or rather *mob*, auditors. The procession began to move—a numerous train of coaches attended the hearse—but, good God! in what disorder can only be expressed by a six-penny pamphlet soon after published, entitled 'Dryden's Funeral.' At last the corpse arrived at the Abbey, which was all unlighted. No organ played, no anthem sung; only two of the singing boys preceded the corpse, who sung an ode of Horace, with each a small candle in their hand. The butchers and other mob broke in like a deluge, so that only about eight or ten gentlemen could get admission, and those forced to cut the way with their drawn swords. The coffin, in this disorder, was let down into Chaucer's grave, with as much confusion and as little ceremony as was possible, every one glad to save themselves from the gentlemen's swords or the clubs of the mob. When the funeral was over, Mr. Charles sent a challenge to Lord Jefferies, who refusing to answer it, he sent several others, and went often himself, but could neither get a letter delivered, nor admittance to speak to him, which so justly incensed him, that he resolved, since his lordship refused to answer him like a gentleman, that he would watch an opportunity to meet him, and fight off hand, though with all the rules of honour; which his lordship hearing, left the town; and Mr. Charles could never have the satisfaction to meet him, though he sought it till his death with the utmost application."

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar; and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused.

Supposing the story true, we may remark that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be justled out of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and, what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions.

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the Duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramatic works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the Duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

He married[123] the Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to Lord Somers, not very honourable to either party.[124] By her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Erasmus-Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to Pope Clement XI.;[125] and, visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor.

[123] The date of Dryden's marriage eluded the inquiries of Malone and Scott. He was married ("by licence") in the church of St. Swithin by London Stone (as appears by the register of that church), on the 1st December, 1663. The entry of the licence, which is dated "ultimo Novembris" 1663, and is in the office of the Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Canterbury, describes him as a parishioner of St. Clement's Danes, of about the age of thirty, and the Lady Elizabeth as twenty-five, and of the parish of St. Martin in the Fields. The poet's signature to the entry is written *Driden*. See article *Suffolk* in Sharpe's 'Peerage.'

[124] See a very *irregular* letter from her to the handsome Earl of Chesterfield, written in 1658, and published in his 'Letters,' p. 95. She died insane in 1714.

[125] No; Chamberlain of the Household to Pope Innocent the Twelfth.

John was author of a comedy called 'The Husband his own Cuckold.' He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order.[126] It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that he taught it to his sons. A man conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.[127]

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account;[128] of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly humane and compassionate, ready to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere reconciliation with those that had offended him. His friendship, where he professed it, went beyond his professions. He was of a very easy, of very pleasing access; but somewhat slow, and, as it were, diffident in his advances to others; he had that in his nature which abhorred intrusion into any society whatever. He was therefore less known, and consequently his character became more liable to misapprehensions and misrepresentations: he was very modest, and very easily to be discountenanced in his approaches to his equals or superiors. As his reading had been very extensive, so was he very happy in a memory tenacious of everything that he had read. He was not more possessed of knowledge than he was communicative of it; but then his com-

[126] He was deputy to his brother.

[127] His third son, Erasmus Henry, succeeded to the baronetcy in 1710, and died the same year. With this son (buried at Canons Ashby) the children of Dryden expired.

[128] We are enabled, from the various paintings and engravings of Dryden, as well as from the less flattering delineations of the satirists of his time, to form a tolerable idea of his face and person. In youth he appears to have been handsome, and of a pleasing countenance; when his age was more advanced he was corpulent and florid, which procured him the nickname attached to him by Rochester [Poet Squab]. In his latter days distress and disappointment probably chilled the fire of his eye, and the force of age destroyed the animation of his countenance. Still, however, his portraits bespeak the look and features of genius; especially that in which he is drawn with his waving grey hairs.—Walter Scott: *Life of Dryden.*

munication was by no means pedantic, or imposed upon the conversation, but just such, and went so far as, by the natural turn of the conversation in which he was engaged, it was necessarily promoted or required. He was extremely ready and gentle in his correction of the errors of any writer who thought fit to consult him, and full as ready and patient to admit the reprehensions of others, in respect of his own oversights or mistakes."[129]

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shown in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability and his friendship indeed were solid virtues; but courtesy and good-humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value; he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his own character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reference of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness; he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-condemnations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

[129] Gray, the poet, saw a portrait of Dryden by Riley at Bifrons, near Canterbury. It was among other Rileys. His note is characteristic: "In a long wig—disagreeable face."—*MS. Journal,* in the possession of Mr. Murray of Albemarle Street.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged [130] with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe? [131]

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgment is incontestable may without usurpation examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose sprightly sayings diverted company; [132] and one of his censurers makes him say,

> "Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
> To writing bred, I knew not what to say." [133]

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

[130] On the authority of a pamphlet published by Tom Brown, in 1690, 'The Reasons of Mr. Bayes' changing his Religion,' Part ii. p. 53, and of some anonymous verses prefixed to the translation of Lucretius, and erroneously ascribed to Dryden. See Fenton's note to the poem to Creech, improperly included in Waller's Poems; and Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 506.

[131] A Mr. Russell relates, on the authority of Southerne, that Dryden, in Southerne's hearing, dissuaded Creech from a translation of Horace, "as an attempt which his genius was not adapted to." See Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 509. Creech dedicates his Horace "To the very much esteemed John Dryden, Esq."

[132] 'Defence of the Essay on Dramatic Poesy.'

[133] Dryden's Satire to his Muse.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language: his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. "His thoughts," when he wrote, "flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to choose, and which to reject." Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk; yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself. But whatever was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the Duke of Ormond,[134] that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consorted: who they were, Carte has not told, but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was indeed reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiors is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable qualities. Caresses and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity. Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but, if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness and abject adulation; but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity. Such degradation of the dignity of

[134] 'Life of James, Duke of Ormond,' vol. ii. p. 554, fol. ed.

genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

Of dramatic immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanness and servility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn.[135] When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expenses, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him whom he wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastic homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift, more delighted with the fertility of his invention, than mortified by the prostitution of his judgment. It is indeed not certain that on these occasions his judgment much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a sullen growl of resentment, or querulous murmur of distress. His works are undervalued, his merit is unrewarded, and "he has few thanks to pay his stars that he was born among Englishmen."

[135] Prefixed to 'The Feigned Courtezans,' 4to. 1679.

To his critics he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by showing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not often depart; his complaints are for the greater part general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended indeed to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to critics, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included; they are like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface of his Fables. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the "horse-play of his raillery;" and asserts that "in many places he has perverted by his glosses the meaning" of what he censures; but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed; and says,[136] with great calmness and candour, "I have pleaded guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine which can be truly argued of obscenity, profaneness, or immorality, and retract them. If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he be my friend, as I have given him no personal occasion to be otherwise, he will be glad of my repentance."[137] Yet as our best dispositions are imperfect,

[136] Preface to Fables, 1700.

[137] He had expressed his contrition long before Collier wrote:

> O gracious God! how far have we
> Profaned thy heavenly gift of poesy!
> Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
> Debased to each obscene and impious use,

he left standing in the same book a reflection on Collier of great asperity, and indeed of more asperity than wit.

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy by the poem of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' which "he thinks a little hard upon his fanatic patrons;" and charges him with borrowing the plan of his 'Arthur' from the preface to Juvenal, "though he had," says he, "the baseness not to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of it to traduce me in a libel."

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him was a 'Satire

> Whose harmony was first ordain'd above
> For tongues of angels, and for hymns of love!
> O wretched we! why were we hurried down
> This lubrique and adulterate age,
> (Nay, added fat pollutions of our own)
> T' increase the streaming ordures of the stage?
> What can we say t' excuse our second fall?
> Let this thy vestal, Heaven, atone for all.
>
> *Ode on Miss Killigrew.*

Collier's complaint appeared early in 1698, and raised immediate hostility in print. Dennis was the first to defend his calling by a pamphlet entitled 'The Usefulness of the Stage.' Some one, then and now anonymous, put forth 'A Defence of Dramatic Poetry.' But these rather heightened than allayed the clamour which Collier had called up. In June, 1698, Vanbrugh set forth a smart snip-snap 'Vindication' of his own two plays; and in July Congreve published his 'Amendments of Mr. Collier's False and Imperfect Citations.' Motteux touched upon the subject before his 'Beauty in Distress,' D'Urfey replied in a Preface to 'The Campaigners,' and Farquhar had a fling at the parson in the Preface to his 'Twin Rivals.' Dryden acknowledged and questioned the sentence upon him, both in prose and verse, in a 'Preface' and a 'Prologue.' Granville, then young, stated the case not unfairly in an 'Epilogue.' Nor was Collier idle; he replied sharply and effectively to Vanbrugh and Congreve. Vanbrugh, with wit on his side, was petulant and careless. Congreve, with more wit than Vanbrugh, was too much hurt to defend himself temperately, or even ably.

> The man of zeal in his religious rage
> Would silence poets, and reduce the stage.
> The poet rashly, to get clear, retorts
> On Kings the scandal, and bespatters Courts.
> Both err; for without mincing, to be plain,
> The guilt is yours of every odious scene.
> The scribbler pinched with hunger writes to dine,
> And to your genius must conform his line;
> Not lewd by choice, but merely to submit:
> Would you encourage sense—sense would be writ.
>
> *Lord Lansdowne's Epilogue to the Jew of Venice,* 1701, 4to.

against Wit' [1700]; in which, having lamented the exuberance of false wit and the deficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should be re-coined before it is current, and appoints masters of assay who shall reject all that is light or debased.

> "'Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless dross
> Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss;
> Ev'n Congreve, Southerne, *Manly* Wycherley,
> When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be;
> Into the melting pot[138] when Dryden comes,
> What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
> How will he shrink when all his lewd allay,
> And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd away!"

Thus stands the passage in the last edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus:—

> "But what remains will be so pure, 'twill bear
> Th' examination of the most severe."[139]

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.[140]

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. "He pretends a quarrel to me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if I have, I am only to ask pardon of good priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisfied that he shall never be able to force himself upon me for an adversary: I contemn him too much to enter into competition with him.

[138] If his [Shakespeare's] embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting pot.—DRYDEN: *Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*.

[139] The first edition of Blackmore's 'Satire' (that in folio, 1700) does not contain the softer couplet which Johnson says is in it; nor do I find the couplet in question in Blackmore's reprint of the 'Satire,' in his Collection of Poems printed in 1718 in 8vo.

[140] Johnson repeats his error in his Life of Blackmore. "In this poem he [Blackmore] justly censured Dryden's impurities, but praised his powers, though in a subsequent edition he retained the satire and omitted the praise. What was his reason I know not; Dryden was then no longer in his way."

"As for the rest of those who have written against me, they are such scoundrels that they deserve not the least notice to be taken of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are only distinguished from the crowd by being remembered to their infamy."

Dryden, indeed, discovered in many of his writings an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the 'Georgics' "The Holy Butcher:" the translation is not, indeed, ridiculous; but Trapp's anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of Paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden's dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine,[141] and I think by Brown,[142] to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies, in the preface to his Fables, that he ever designed to enter into the Church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to Popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

[141] Langbaine, ed. 1691, p. 171.

[142] But you, I find, still continue your old humour, which we are to date from the year of Hegira, the loss of Eton, or since orders were refused you.—Tom Brown: *Preface to 2nd Dialogue.*

The persecution of critics was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such solicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such solicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigences. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expenses no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the laureate, to which King James added the office of historiographer,[143] perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal; and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow.[144]

[143] Here is a great mistake. King James only continued him in the office of Historiographer; for the same letters patent (18th August, 1670) which created him Poet Laureate on Davenant's death, created him Historiographer Royal on the death of Howell.

[144] In a collection of official papers sold (9th March, 1841) at Fletcher's, in Piccadilly, was an order (Lot 108), signed by Laurence Hyde and two other Lords of the Treasury, to pay to John Dryden, Esq., Poet Laureate and Historiographer to his Majesty, the sum of *twenty and five pounds*, "upon his pension of c^{li} per annum, which his Majesty is pleased to allow him by way of addition to the sum of cc^{li} per annum by letters patent formerly granted to him."

The pension was for the quarter ended the feast of the Annunciation, 1678-9; the date of the order 7th Jan., 1679; and of the receipt, to which William Walsh was witness, 18th June, 1680.

This is a new fact in Dryden's life. The letters patent of the 4th March, 1685-6 (quoted by Malone, p. 190, and Scott, p. 276), granting a pension of 100*l.* a year to Dryden, is, I suspect, only a renewal by King James of the additional pension granted by King Charles II., and which of course expired with the life of that King on the 5th of Feb., 1684-5.

There is an affecting letter in print from Dryden to Hyde, Earl of Rochester, in which he seeks payment of "half a year of his salary," then due, and in which he urges his claim for "some small employment" to render his "condition easy." . . "I have three sons," he writes, "growing to man's estate; I breed them all up to learning, beyond my fortune, but they are too hopeful to be

Of his plays the profit was not great;[145] and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson,[146] I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers:—

"I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden, Esq., or order, on the 25th of March, 1699, the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in consideration of ten thousand verses, which the said John Dryden, Esq., is to deliver to me, Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof seven thousand five hundred verses, more or less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson's possession. And I do hereby farther promise, and engage myself, to make up the said

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neglected though all I want. Be pleased to look on me with an eye of compassion; some small employment would render my condition easy. The King is not unsatisfied of me; the Duke has often promised me his assistance; and your Lordship is the conduit through which their favours pass: either in the Customs or the Appeals of the Excise, or some other way, means cannot be wanting if you please to have the will. 'Tis enough for one age to have neglected Mr. Cowley and starved Mr. Butler." (See Malone, p. 180, and Part II., p. 21.)

"We know," says Scott, "that this affecting remonstrance was in part successful; for long afterwards he says [Ded. of Cleomenes], in allusion to this period—'Even from a bare treasury my success has been contrary to that of Mr. Cowley; and Gideon's fleece has there been moistened when all the ground was dry about it.' But in the admission of this claim to the more regular payment of his pension was comprehended all Rochester's title to Dryden's gratitude. The poet could not obtain the small employment which he so earnestly solicited."—Scott: *Life of Dryden*, p. 254.

But this is not the case: Lord Rochester did more than obtain the more regular payment of the poet's pension, for he procured him in the London Customs something in the nature of the employment he solicited. The knowledge of this circumstance I gather from the Enrolments of the Audit Office (vol. D. pp. 256 and 395), where the letters patent appointing John Dryden Collector of the Customs in the port of London, dated 17th Dec., 1683, and 20th Feb., 1686, are entered at full length.

Further confirmation of this may be found, if other is wanting, in the recently printed Secret Service Expenses of Charles II. and James II., where at p. 138 the entry occurs of a payment of 5*l.* "To John Dryden, collector of the duties upon cloth in the port of London, for one year's salary, ended at Christmas 1685."

[145] For 'Cleomenes'—his last play but one—he received (6th Oct., 1691) from Tonson thirty guineas, as appears by the receipt in the poet's own handwriting. Malone's 'Life of Dryden,' p. 455. See Note to Dryden's letter to his Sons at p. 389.

[146] Not the great nephew of Dryden's Jacob Tonson, who died 31st March, 1767, but Richard Tonson (I take it), who died 9th Oct. 1772. (See Note to Milton's 'Life,' p. 138.) The 'Virgil' agreement is now, by Mr. Rogers's liberality, in the British Museum.

sum of two hundred and fifty guineas three hundred pounds sterling to the said John Dryden, Esq., his executors, administrators, or assigns, at the beginning of the second impression of the said ten thousand verses.

"In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this 20th day of March, 1698–9,

"JACOB TONSON.

"Sealed and delivered, being first stampt, pursuant to the acts of parliament for that purpose, in the presence of

"BENJ. PORTLOCK,
"WILL. CONGREVE."

"March 24th, 1698.

"Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson the sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings, in pursuance of an agreement for ten thousand verses to be delivered by me to the said Jacob Tonson, whereof I have already delivered to him about seven thousand five hundred, more or less; he the said Jacob Tonson being obliged to make up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred pounds, at the beginning of the second impression of the foresaid ten thousand verses;

"I say, received by me,

"JOHN DRYDEN.

"Witness, CHARLES DRYDEN."

Two hundred and fifty guineas at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*[147]

It is manifest, from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of Fables, which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which therefore the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.[148]

I have been told of another letter[149] yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money to pay for a watch which he

[147] Tonson, who is himself a wit,
Counts writers' merits by the sheet.
PRIOR *to Fleetwood Shepherd.*

[148] This was not the case. Dryden died before the second impression of the Fables appeared, and the receipt, dated 11th June, 1713, of Ann Sylvius, "administratrix to the said John Dryden of such effects as were not administered to by Charles Dryden," is for 31*l.* 5*s.*—making the sum of 300*l.* "in full for the copy of a book intituled 'Dryden's Fables.'" Ann Sylvius was Dryden's niece.

[149] Sixteen letters from Dryden to Tonson (one from Tonson to Dryden included) were printed by Malone, and have since been incorporated in Scott's edition of 'Dryden's Works.'

had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigences but to his bookseller.

The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of Oxford,[150] that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away: for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and, if you leave me unprotected, I must suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known: Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations,[151] was informed that his Fables obtained five hundred pounds from the Duchess of Ormond—a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family;[152] and he quotes Moyle, as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of 'Alexander's Feast.'[153]

[150] Communicated to Dr. Johnson by Dr. King, of Oxford.—MALONE: *Life of Dryden*, p. 524.

[151] He [Johnson] told us he had sent Derrick to Dryden's relatives to gather materials for his Life, and he believed Derrick had got all that he himself should have got, but it was nothing.—*Boswell by Croker*, p. 346.

Derrick, though he did not himself introduce me to Dr. Johnson as he promised, had the merit of introducing me to Davies, the immediate introducer. —*Boswell by Croker*, p. 735.

[152] Malone justly supposes that the Duchess's present was only 100*l*. To Flatman, for his Poem on the Death of the Earl of Ossory, the great Duke of Ormond gave a mourning ring, with a diamond, worth 100*l*.

[153] I am writing a song for St. Cecilia's Feast, who, you know, is the patroness of music. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial.—DRYDEN *to his Sons* (see Letter at p. 389).

Derrick's words are, "Mr. Walter Moyle, who wrote the Essays, used to

In those days the economy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain; of this disorder there is reason to believe that the laureate sometimes felt the effects; for in one of his prefaces he complains of those who, being intrusted with the distribution of the prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one [154] told me, that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other [155] related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the Appendix to the 'Life of Congreve' [156] is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity. That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint.

> "The utmost malice of the stars is past.—
> Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,
> And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark prison freed,
> Those weights took off that on his planet hung,
> Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed."

He has elsewhere shown his attention to the planetary powers;

say that it was composed for the Cecilian Concert, and that our author, for the use of it, received 40*l*." Mr. Moyle died in 1721; Derrick therefore could not himself have conversed with him, being then not born. In Moyle's Works I find nothing on this subject.—MALONE: *Life of Dryden*, p. 287.

[154] Colley Cibber.

[155] Old Swinney.

[156] By Mrs. Thomas, 8vo., 1730, and before alluded to: see p. 320.

and in the preface to his Fables has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition by attributing the same to some of the ancients. The letter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestic manners of a man whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critic and a poet.

Dryden may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two 'Arts of English Poetry' were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's 'Essay on Dramatic Poetry' was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatic poems was then not generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct; and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it wanted before; or, rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.[157]

The 'Dialogue on the Drama' was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakespeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastic criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus, on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon, by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakespeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.[158]

[157] Dryden had, not many years before, scattered criticism over his Prefaces with very little parsimony; but though he sometimes condescended to be somewhat familiar, his manner was in general too scholastic for those who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not easy to understand their master. His observations were framed rather for those that were learning to write than for those that read only to talk.—JOHNSON: *Life of Addison.*

[158] To begin with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily: when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgment by his power of performance.

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, "malim cum Scaligero errare, quam cum Clavio recte sapere;" that "it was more eligible to go wrong with one than right with the other." A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, dressed in the graces of elegance; and, if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself; we are led only through fragrance and flowers. Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of

Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great when some great occasion is presented to him; no man can ever say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets.

Quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.

DRYDEN: *On Dramatick Poesy.*

labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things, and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of the praises which he bestows on 'Palamon and Arcite,' says, "Novimus judicium Drydeni de poemate quodam Chauceri, pulchro sane illo, et admodum laudando, nimirum quod non modo vere epicum sit, sed Iliada etiam atque Æneada æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissimam critices normam exactas: illo judice id plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ manibus habet, et in quo nunc occupatur."

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatic rhyme is generally known. Spence, in his remarks on Pope's 'Odyssey,' produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the 'Æneid,' in favour of translating an epic poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the 'Iliad,' some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any licence to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entangle himself in his own sophistries. But when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comic poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by Sewel.[159] His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad, if he had heard him thundering out

"Quæ superimposito moles geminata colosso."

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggeration somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one sounding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was impressed into the service.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard; he cited 'Gorboduc,' which he had never seen;[160] gives[161] a false account of Chapman's versification; and discovers in the preface to his Fables that he translated the first book of the 'Iliad,' without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden never made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge; it is not to be supposed that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students, but his scholastic acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten

[159] Preface to Ovid's Metamorphoses.—JOHNSON.

[160] He has mistaken the sex of Gorboduc. Dedication of 'Rival Ladies,' 1664, 4to. The same mistake was made by Oldham in his 'Horace:'—

When Bussy d'Ambois and his fustian took,
And men were ravish'd with Queen Gorboduc.

Dryden in the same Dedication erroneously ascribes to Shakespeare the invention of that kind of writing "which we call blank verse."

[161] 'Account of Annus Mirabilis.'

track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his 'Dialogue on the Drama' he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of 'Medea' is not Ovid's, because it is not sufficiently interesting and pathetic. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play—for one line is left us—is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shows what he wanted; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much, it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence; yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion; by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books,

or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out by the impetuosity of his genius to more vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred the praise which he gives his master Charles:—

> "His conversation, wit, and parts,
> His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
> Were such, dead authors could not give,
> But habitudes of those that live;
> Who lighting him, did greater lights receive;
> He drain'd from all, and all they knew,
> His apprehensions quick, his judgment true:
> That the most learn'd with shame confess
> His knowledge more, his reading only less."

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactic or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious.[162] They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced, nor the periods modelled: every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little is gay; what is great is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Everything is excused by the play of images and the sprightliness of

[162] Read all the Prefaces of Dryden,
For these our critics much confide in;
Though merely writ at first for filling,
To raise the volume's price a shilling.

SWIFT: *On Poetry, a Rhapsody.*

expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much will not easily escape a manner—such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always *another and the same;* he does not exhibit a second time the same elegances in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters. The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose,[163] however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham; they had shown that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? Their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regu-

[163] I have heard Dryden frequently own with pleasure that if he had any talent for English prose, it was owing to his having often read the writings of the great Archbishop Tillotson.—CONGREVE: *Dedication to Duke of Newcastle.*

Gray, who thought the prose of Dryden almost equal to his poetry, used to express his surprise that it should have been founded upon the study of Tillotson, whose style is certainly in comparison diffuse and languid. Fox's admiration of Dryden's prose seems to have been excessive. He was unwilling to use a word not to be found in Dryden.

larity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastic and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross; and from a nice distinction of these different parts arises a great part of the beauty of style. But, if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion; and every man took for every purpose what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose had been rarely attempted: we had few elegances or flowers of speech; the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have over-borne the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of Ancient Writers; a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace

almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier of the last age,[164] has struggled hard to comprise every book of the English Metamorphoses in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to show that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such copyers were a servile race; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.[165]

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. "Translation, therefore," says Dryden, "is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase."

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened; hyperbolical ostentation is not to be

[164] Preface to 'Fables,' 1700. In the Dedication to the 'Third Miscellany' (1693) he is not so kind. He thinks that much of Ovid's poetry had evaporated in his hands.

[165] The accuracy of Jonson found more imitators than the elegance of Fairfax; and May, Sandys, and Holyday confined themselves to the toil of reading line for line, not, indeed, with equal felicity, for May and Sandys were poets, and Holyday only a scholar and a critic.—Johnson: *Idler*, No. 69.

repressed; nor sententious affectation to have its point blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excel him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburne, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry; and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.[166]

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigences in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.[167]

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not

[166] The reader who wishes to pursue this subject should read Cowper's admirable Preface to his translation of the 'Iliad.'

[167] Extreme haste in writing ought never to be imputed as a fault to Dryden, but to those who suffered so noble a genius to lie under the necessity of it.—Pope: *Notes to Iliad.*

Mr. Macaulay ('Ed. Rev.' No. cxxxvii. p. 167) has pointed out a remarkable instance of borrowing by Dryden. In Knolles's 'History of the Turks,' under a portrait of Mustapha I. is the following couplet:—

> Greatnesse on goodnesse loves to slide, not stand,
> And leaves for Fortune's ice Vertue's firme land.

And in 'Absalom and Achitophel' (a publication some sixty years subsequent) is this couplet:—

> But wild Ambition loves to slide, not stand,
> And Fortune's ice prefers to Virtue's land.

how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have written better; or that indeed he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But, as is said by his Sebastian,

"What had been, is unknown; what is, appears."

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support; his plays were therefore often borrowed; and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication till he has satisfied his friends and himself, till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination, and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the public has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the Muse. But after so many inauguratory gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not

be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegances and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be despatched while conversation is yet busy, and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may however secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell was the first public event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroic stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and, though not always proper, show a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth; and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant was perhaps at this time his favourite author, though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification: there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the King's exile:

> "He, toss'd by Fate,
> Could taste no sweets of youth's desired age,
> But found his life too true a pilgrimage."

And afterwards, to show how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark:

> "Well might the ancient poets then confer
> On Night the honour'd name of *counsellor*,
> Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,
> We light alone in dark afflictions find."

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found:

"'Twas Monk, whom Providence design'd to loose
Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene
Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,
To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
Not in their bulk, but in their order strong.
Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
With ease such fond chimæras we pursue,
As fancy frames for fancy to subdue:
But, when ourselves to action we betake,
It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make.
How hard was then his task, at once to be
What in the body natural we see!
Man's Architect distinctly did ordain
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,
Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense
The springs of motion from the seat of sense.
'Twas not the hasty product of a day,
But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.
He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,
Would let them play a-while upon the hook.
Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,
At first embracing what it strait doth crush.
Wise leeches will not vain receipts obtrude,
While growing pains pronounce the humours crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill
Till some safe crisis authorise their skill."

He had not yet learned, indeed he never learned well, to forbear the improper use of mythology. After having rewarded the heathen deities for their care,

"With Alga who the sacred altar strows?
To all the sea-gods Charles an offering owes;
A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain;
A lamb to you, ye Tempests of the Main."

He tells us, in the language of religion,

"Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles from thence,
As heaven itself, is took by violence."

And afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of Sacred History.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted; as,

"For by example most we sinn'd before,
And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore."

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles:

"The winds, that never moderation knew,
Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew:
Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge
Their straiten'd lungs.—
It is no longer motion cheats your view;
As you meet it, the land approacheth you;
The land returns, and in the white it wears
The marks of penitence and sorrow bears."

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read to Malherbe some verses, in which he represents France as moving out of its place to receive the king. "Though this," said Malherbe, "was in my time, I do not remember it."

His poem on 'The Coronation' has a more even tenor of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted:

"You have already quench'd sedition's brand;
And zeal, which burnt it, only warms the land;
The jealous sects that dare not trust their cause
So far from their own will as to the laws,
You for their umpire and their synod take,
And their appeal alone to Cæsar make."

Here may be found one particle of that old versification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another:[168]

"Nor is it duty, or our hopes alone,
Create that joy, but full *fruition*."

In the verses to the Lord Chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it

[168] There are other examples, but all in his earlier poems.

must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive:

> "In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,
> Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky:
> So in this hemisphere our utmost view
> Is only bounded by our king and you:
> Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
> And beyond that no farther heaven can find.
> So well your virtues do with his agree,
> That, though your orbs of different greatness be,
> Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,
> His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.
> Nor could another in your room have been,
> Except an emptiness had come between."

The comparison of the Chancellor to the Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it:

> "And as the Indies were not found before
> Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore
> The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
> Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd;
> So by your counsels we are brought to view
> A rich and undiscover'd world in you."

There is another comparison, for there is little else in the poem, of which, though perhaps it cannot be explained into plain prosaic meaning, the mind perceives enough to be delighted, and readily forgives its obscurity for its magnificence:

> "How strangely active are the arts of peace,
> Whose restless motions less than wars do cease!
> Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise;
> And war more force, but not more pains employs.
> Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,
> That, like the earth's, it leaves our sense behind;
> While you so smoothly turn and rowl our sphere,
> That rapid motion does but rest appear.
> For as in nature's swiftness, with the throng
> Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,
> All seems at rest to the deluded eye,
> Mov'd by the soul of the same harmony:
> So carried on by your unwearied care,
> We rest in peace, and yet in motion share."

To this succeed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden's

first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature, for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed:

> "Let envy then those crimes within you see,
> From which the happy never must be free;
> Envy that does with misery reside,
> The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride."

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmalleable thoughts; but as a specimen of his abilities to unite the most unsociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning:

> "Yet unimpaired with labours, or with time,
> Your age but seems to a new youth to climb.
> Thus heavenly bodies do our time beget,
> And measure change, but share no part of it:
> And still it shall without a weight increase,
> Like this new year, whose motions never cease.
> For since the glorious course you have begun
> Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
> It must both weightless and immortal prove,
> Because the centre of it is above."

In the 'Annus Mirabilis' he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from this experience of its inconvenience, for he complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the Fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroic poetry; but a sea-fight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them; for they borrow everything from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life. Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images. Waller had described a sea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully

answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the war with Spain; perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on the civil war of Rome, 'Orbem jam totum,' &c.

Of the King collecting his navy, he says:

> "It seems as every ship their sovereign knows,
> His awful summons they so soon obey;
> So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,
> And so to pasture follow through the sea."

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed perhaps indecently hyperbolical, but certainly in a mode totally different?

> "To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
> Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies;
> And heaven, as if there wanted lights above,
> For tapers made two glaring comets rise."

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very complete specimen of the descriptions in this poem:

> "And now approach'd their fleet from India, fraught
> With all the riches of the rising sun:
> And precious sand from southern climates brought,
> (The fatal regions where the war begun.)
>
> Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,
> Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coast they bring:
> There first the North's cold bosom spices bore,
> And winter brooded on the eastern spring.

By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,
Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie;
And round about their murdering cannon lay,
At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
The English undertake th' unequal war:
Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,
Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those:
These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy;
And to such height their frantic passion grows,
That what both love, both hazard to destroy.

Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,
And now their odours arm'd against them fly:
Some preciously by shatter'd porcelain fall,
And some by aromatic splinters die.

And, though by tempests of the prize bereft,
In heaven's inclemency some ease we find:
Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,
And only yielded to the seas and wind."

In this manner is the sublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet: this surely needed no illustration; yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but "like hunted castors;" and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses—their *perfumes* betrayed them. The Husband and the Lover, though of more dignity than the Castor, are images too domestic to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry.

"The night comes on, we eager to pursue
The combat still, and they asham'd to leave;
'Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,
And doubtful moon-light did our rage deceive.

In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,
And loud applause of their great leader's fame:
In fiery dreams the Dutch they still destroy,
And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd flame.

Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,
Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie;
Faint sweats all down their mighty members run,
(Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply.)

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore:
Or, in dark churches, walk among the dead;
They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more."

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge; and of this kind, certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language; "and certainly," says he, "as those who in a logical dispute keep in general terms would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance."

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

"So here, some pick out bullets from the side,
Some drive old *oakum* through each *seam* and rift:
Their left-hand does the *calking-iron* guide,
The rattling *mallet* with the right they lift.

With boiling pitch another near at hand
(From friendly Sweden brought) the *seams instops*;
Which, well paid o'er, the salt-sea waves withstand,
And shake them from the rising beak in drops.

Some the *gall'd* ropes with dauby *marling* bind,
Or sear-cloth masts with strong *tarpawling* coats:
To try new *shrouds* one mounts into the wind,
And one below their ease or stiffness notes."

I suppose there is not one term which every reader does not wish away.

His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says that, by the help of the philosophers,

> "Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,
> By which remotest regions are allied."—

Which he is constrained to explain in a note "by a more exact measure of longitude." It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science into poetry, and have shown, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the king, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention; as in the beginning:

> "The diligence of trades, and noiseful gain,
> And luxury, more late, asleep were laid!
> All was the Night's, and in her silent reign
> No sound the rest of Nature did invade
> In this deep quiet———"

The expression "All was the Night's" is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

> "*Omnia noctis erant, placida composta quiete,*"

that he might have concluded better,

> "*Omnia noctis erant.*"

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated:

> "The ghosts of traitors from the Bridge descend
> With bold fanatic spectres to rejoice;
> About the fire into a dance they bend,
> And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice."

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and with an event which poets cannot always boast has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, "to which," says he, "my genius never much inclined me," merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of Harte, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of 'Aureng Zebe;' and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote 'Tyrannic Love,' and the 'State of Innocence,' he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effects upon the passions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of Night in the 'Indian Emperor,' and the rise and fall of empire in the 'Conquest of Granada,' are more frequently repeated than any lines in 'All for Love,' or 'Don Sebastian.'

To search his plays for vigorous sallies and sententious elegances, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatic labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to

the 'English Epistles of Ovid,' one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the Earl of Mulgrave.[169]

'Absalom and Achitophel' is a work so well known that particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible—acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers—and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience: it admitted little imagery or description; and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious: though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that soothes the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As an approach to the historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is, therefore, an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed of many sects, various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports; while the King's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but, when expectation is at the height, the King makes a speech, and

"Henceforth a series of new times began."

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass,

[169] Dryden translated two Epistles, Canace to Macareus, and Dido to Æneas. See Note 80, p. 306.

which vanishes at once into air when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by Tate, there is a long insertion, which, for its poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The 'Medal,' written upon the same principles with 'Absalom and Achitophel,' but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas as a series of events or multiplicity of agents. This poem, therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured:

> "Power was his aim; but, thrown from that pretence,
> The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
> And malice reconcil'd him to his prince.
> Him, in the anguish of his soul, he serv'd;
> Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd:
> Behold him now exalted into trust;
> His counsels oft convenient, seldom just;
> Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave,
> He had a grudging still to be a knave.
> The frauds he learnt in his fanatic years
> Made him uneasy in his lawful gears,
> At best as little honest as he could,
> And, like white witches, mischievously good.
> To his first bias, longingly, he leans;
> And rather would be great by wicked means."

The 'Threnodia,' which, by a term I am afraid neither authorised nor analogical, he calls 'Augustalis,' is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetic. He seems

to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. "He is," he says, "petrified with grief," but the marble sometimes relents and trickles in a joke.

> "The sons of art all med'cines tried,
> And every noble remedy applied;
> With emulation each essay'd
> His utmost skill; *nay, more, they pray'd:*
> Never was losing game with better conduct play'd."

He had been a little inclined to merriment before upon the prayers of a nation for their dying sovereign; nor was he serious enough to keep heathen fables out of his religion:

> "With him th' innumerable crowd of armed prayers
> Knock'd at the gates of heaven, and knock'd aloud;
> *The first well-meaning rude petitioners*
> All for his life assail'd the throne,
> All would have brib'd the skies by offering up their own.
> So great a throng not heaven itself could bar;
> 'Twas almost borne by force, *as in the giants' war.*
> The pray'rs, at least, for his reprieve were heard;
> His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd."

There is throughout the composition a desire of splendour without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyric or elegiac poetry. His poem on the death of Mrs. Killigrew is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced.[170] The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm. "Fervet immensusque ruit." All the stanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first Ode for Cecilia's Day, which is lost in the splendour of the second, there are passages which would have

[170] And yet he says a little further on (p. 377) that 'Alexander's Feast' is, "perhaps, superior in the whole."

dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diapason* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another:

"From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high,
Arise, ye more than dead.
Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man."

The conclusion is likewise striking, but it includes an image so awful in itself that it can owe little to poetry; and I could wish the antithesis of *music untuning* had found some other place:

"As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the bless'd above:
So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky."

Of his skill in elegy he has given a specimen in his 'Eleonora,' of which the following lines discover their author:

"Though all these rare endowments of the mind
Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,
The figure was with full perfection crown'd;
Though not so large an orb, as truly round:

As when in glory, through the public place,
The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,
And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd;

And so the swift procession hurried on,
That all, though not distinctly, might be shown:
So in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind:
And multitudes of virtues pass'd along,
Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,
Ambitious to be seen, and then make room
For greater multitudes that were to come.
Yet unemployed no minute slipp'd away;
Moments were precious in so short a stay.
The haste of Heaven to have her was so great,
That some were single acts, though each complete;
And every act stood ready to repeat."

This piece, however, is not without its faults; there is so much likeness in the initial comparison that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented:

"As, when some great and gracious monarch dies,
Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs, rise
Among the sad attendants; then the sound
Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,
Through town and country, till the dreadful blast
Is blown to distant colonies at last,
Who then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain
For his long life, and for his happy reign;
So slowly by degrees unwilling fame
Did matchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,
Till public as the loss the news became."

This is little better than to say in praise of a shrub that it is as green as a tree; or of a brook that it waters a garden as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates; the praise being therefore inevitably general, fixes no impression upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation. Knowledge of the subject is to the poet what durable materials are to the architect.

The 'Religio Laici,' which borrows its title from the 'Religio Medici' of Browne,[171] is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped that the full effulgence of his genius would be

[171] Mason afterwards wrote the 'Religio Clerici.'

found. But unhappily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical: he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation:

> "And this unpolish'd, rugged verse I chose,
> As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose."

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very improperly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous, in which metre has neither weakened the force nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaic in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is the 'Hind and the Panther,' the longest of all Dryden's original poems—an allegory intended to comprise and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more absurd than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topics of argument, endeavours to show the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask, why, since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where?

The Hind at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but, walking home with the Panther, talks by the way of the Nicene Fathers, and at last declares herself to be the Catholic Church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the 'Country Mouse' and the 'City Mouse' of Montague and Prior; and in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems, to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.[172]

[172] There is a story of great pain suffered, and of tears shed, on this occasion,

Pope, whose judgment was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may, therefore, reasonably infer that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

> "A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
> Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd:
> Without unspotted, innocent within,
> She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
> Yet had she oft been chas'd with horns and hounds,
> And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds
> Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
> And doom'd to death, though fated not to die."

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, "to give the majestic turn of heroic poesy;" and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the wolf, is not very heroically majestic:

> "More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race
> Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face:
> Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.
> His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
> Close clapp'd for shame; but his rough crest he rears,
> And pricks up his predestinating ears."

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by Dryden, who thought it hard that "an old man should be so treated by those to whom he had always been civil." By tales like these is the envy, raised by superior abilities, every day gratified: when they are attacked, every one hopes to see them humbled; what is hoped is readily believed; and what is believed is confidently told. Dryden had been more accustomed to hostilities, than that such enemies should break his quiet; and, if we can suppose him vexed, it would be hard to deny him sense enough to conceal his uneasiness.—JOHNSON: *Life of Prior.*

His general character of the other sorts of beasts that never go to church, though sprightly and keen, has, however, not much of heroic poesy:

"These are the chief: to number o'er the rest,
And stand, like Adam, naming every beast,
Were weary work; nor will the Muse describe
A slimy born and sun-begotten tribe,
Who, far from steeples and their sacred sound,
In fields their sullen conventicles found.
These gross, half-animated lumps I leave;
Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive;
But, if they think at all, 'tis sure no higher
Than matter, put in motion, may aspire;
Souls that can scarce ferment their mass of clay;
So drossy, so divisible are they,
As would but serve pure bodies for allay;
Such souls as shards produce, such beetle things
As only buzz to Heaven with evening wings;
Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;
Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
They know not beings, and but hate a name;
To them the Hind and Panther are the same."

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will show how steadily he kept his resolution of heroic dignity:

"For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair
To ferny heaths and to their forest lair,
She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
Proffering the Hind to wait her half the way:
That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk
Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
To chat a while on their adventures past:
Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot
Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.
Yet, wondering how of late she grew estrang'd,
Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,
She thought this hour th' occasion would present
To learn her secret cause of discontent,
Which well she hop'd might be with ease redress'd,
Considering her a well-bred, civil beast,
And more a gentlewoman than the rest.
After some common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the spotted muff began."

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived; the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous, lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole; the King is now Cæsar and now the Lion; and the name Pan is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention, and there are, indeed, few negligences in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on 'The Birth of the Prince of Wales' nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the King was then standing, which the laureate apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from Court, and made him again a playwright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holyday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth, and Holyday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes.[173] A new version was proposed to

[173] Thus far that learned critic Barten Holyday, whose interpretation and illustrations of Juvenal are as excellent as the verse of his translation and his English are lame and pitiful.—DRYDEN: *Dedication of Juvenal*, 1693.

the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity, of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except Creech, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore, perhaps, possible to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated, some passages excepted, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all other productions of Dryden it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says that he once translated it at school; but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook, perhaps, the most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Virgil, for which he had shown how well he was qualified by his version of the 'Pollio,'[174] and two episodes, one of 'Nisus and Euryalus,' the other of 'Mezentius and Lausus.'[175]

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendour of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment is safe by its solidity, but the blossoms of elocution easily drop

[174] Printed in Tonson's first 'Miscellany,' 1684.

[175] Printed in Tonson's second 'Miscellany,' 1685, where he also inserted 'The Speech of Venus to Vulcan' from the eighth book.

away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which he can best adorn; the translator must, at all hazards, follow his original, and express thoughts which perhaps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the 'Georgics' and the 'Æneid' should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the public were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope,[176] "the most noble and spirited translation I know in any language." It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and Georgics; and as he professes to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first Georgic. The world has forgotten his book; but since his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks on the invocation before the first Georgic, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

> "What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn
> The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn."—*Ver.* 1.

"It 's *unlucky*, they say, *to stumble at the threshold*, but what has a *plenteous harvest* to do here? *Virgil* would not pretend

[176] Preface to the 'Iliad.'

to prescribe *rules* for *that* which depends not on the *husbandman's* care, but the *disposition of Heaven* altogether. Indeed, the *plenteous crop* depends somewhat on the *good method of tillage*, and where the *land* 's ill manured, the *corn*, without a miracle, can be but *indifferent;* but the *harvest* may be *good*, which is its *properest* epithet, though the *husbandman's skill* were never so *indifferent*. The next *sentence* is *too literal*, and *when to plough* had been *Virgil's* meaning, and intelligible to everybody; and *when to sow the corn* is a needless *addition*.

> "The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine,
> And when to geld the lambs, and sheer the swine,"—*Ver.* 3.

would as well have fallen under the *cura boum, quis cultus habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. D.'s *deduction* of particulars."

> "The birth and genius of the fruitful bee
> I sing, Mæcenas, and I sing to thee."—*Ver.* 5.

But where did *experientia* ever signify *birth and genius?* or what ground was there for such a *figure* in this place? How much more manly is Mr. Ogilby's version!

> "What makes rich grounds, in what celestial signs
> 'Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines;
> What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,
> And several arts improving frugal bees;
> I sing, Mæcenas."

Which four lines, tho' faulty enough, are yet much more to the purpose than Mr. D.'s six.

> "From fields and mountains to my song repair."—*Ver.* 22.

For *patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycæi*——Very well explain'd!

> "Inventer, Pallas, of the fattening oil,
> Thou founder of the plough, and plough-man's toil!"
> *Ver.* 23, 24.

Written as if *these* had both been *Pallas's invention.*" "*The plough-man's toil* 's impertinent."

"——The shroud-like cypress———"—*Ver.* 25.

Why *shroud-like?* Is a *cypress* pull'd up by the *roots*, which the *sculpture* in the *last Eclogue* fills *Silvanus's* hand with, so very like a *shroud?* Or did not Mr. D. think of that kind of *cypress* us'd often for *scarves and hat-bands* at funerals formerly, or for *widows' vails*, &c.?—if so, 'twas a *deep*, *good thought.*

"———————— That wear
The rural honours, and increase the year."—*Ver.* 26.

What's meant by *increasing the year?* Did the *gods* or *goddesses* add more *months*, or *days*, or *hours* to it? Or how can *arva tueri* signify to *wear rural honours?* Is this to *translate* or *abuse* an *author?* The next *couplet* is borrow'd from Ogilby, I suppose, because *less to the purpose* than ordinary:

"The patron of the world, and Rome's peculiar guard."—*Ver.* 33.

Idle, and none of Virgil's, no more than the sence of the *precedent couplet;* so, again, he *interpolates* Virgil with that and *the round circle of the year to guide powerful of blessings, which thou strew'st around.* A ridiculous *Latinism*, and an *impertinent addition;* indeed the whole *period* is but one piece of *absurdity* and *nonsence*, as those who lay it with the *original* must find.

"And Neptune shall resign the fasces of the sea."

Was he *consul* or *dictator* there?

"And watry virgins for thy bed shall strive."—*Ver.* 42, 43.

Both absurd *interpolations.*

"Where in the void of heaven a place is free.
Ah! happy, D——n, *were* that place *for thee!*"—*Ver.* 47, 48.

But where is *that void?* Or what does our *translator* mean by it? He knows what Ovid says *God* did to prevent such a *void* in heaven; perhaps this was then forgotten: but Virgil talks more sensibly.

"The scorpion ready to receive thy laws."—*Ver.* 49.

No, he would not then have *gotten out of his way* so fast.

"Though Proserpine affects her silent seat."—*Ver.* 56.

What made *her* then so *angry* with Ascalaphus for preventing her return? She was now mus'd to Patience under the *determinations* of Fate, rather than *fond* of her *residence.*

"Pity the poet's and the plough-man's cares,
Interest thy greatness in our mean affairs,
And use thyself betimes to hear our prayers."
Ver. 61, 62, 63.

Which is such a wretched *perversion* of Virgil's *noble thought* as Vicars would have blush'd at; but Mr. Ogilby makes us some amends by his better lines:

"O wheresoe'er thou art, from thence incline,
And grant assistance to my bold design!
Pity, with me, poor husbandmen's affairs,
And now, as if translated, hear our prayers."

This is *sense*, and *to the purpose:* the other poor *mistaken stuff.*"

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors, and of whom it may be reasonably imagined that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined, and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous, and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verse a translation of the Æneid, which when dragged into the world did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it; but that such a version there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.[177]

With not much better success, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted [1718] another blank version of the Æneid; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the Eclogues and Georgics. His

[177] Dr. Brady's 'Translation of the Æneid' was published in 4 vols. 8vo., 1716–26.

book may continue its existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of school-boys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the mellifluence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil;[178] and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison[179] by opposing one passage to another—a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version: but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critic may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurement and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain which the reader throws away. He only is the master who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an

[178] By Christopher Pitt, who translated the 'Æneid;' by Joseph Warton and Beattie, who translated the 'Pastorals.'

[179] At last, without any further contention with his modesty, or any awe of the name of Dryden, he [Pitt] gave us a complete English Æneid, which I am sorry not to see joined in this publication with his other poems. It would have been pleasing to have an opportunity of comparing the two best translations that perhaps were ever produced by one nation of the same author.

Pitt, engaging as a rival with Dryden, naturally observed his failures, and avoided them; and, as he wrote after Pope's 'Iliad,' he had an example of an exact, equable, and splendid versification. With these advantages, seconded by great diligence, he might successfully labour particular passages, and escape many errors. If the two versions were compared, perhaps the result would be that Dryden leads the reader forward by his general vigour and sprightliness, and Pitt often stops him to contemplate the excellence of a single couplet; that Dryden's faults are forgotten in the hurry of delight, and that Pitt's beauties are neglected in the languor of a cold and listless perusal; that Pitt pleases the critics, and Dryden the people; that Pitt is quoted, and Dryden read.—JOHNSON: *Life of Pitt.*

eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predomination I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakespeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his 'Fables,' in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *rifaccimento*, a renovation of ancient writers by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of Boiardo has been new-dressed by Domenichi and Berni. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed by Dryden, require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of Palamon and Arcite, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it in the general Preface, and in a poetical Dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, 'Sigismunda' may be defended by the celebrity of the story. 'Theodore and Honoria,' though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description. And 'Cymon' was formerly a tale of such reputation, that at the revival of letters it was translated into Latin by one of the Beroalds.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must however be distinguished. The 'Ode for St. Cecilia's Day,' perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand

without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it in some other of Dryden's works, that excellence must be found. Compared with the 'Ode on Killigrew,' it may be pronounced perhaps superior in the whole;[180] but without any single part equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences; some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes;[181] a defect which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but it is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vicious; the music of Timotheus, which *raised a mortal to the skies*, had only a metaphorical power; that of Cecilia, which *drew an angel down*, had a real effect: the crown therefore could not reasonably be divided.

In a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

[180] He had forgotten that he had already pronounced (p. 363) the 'Ode on Killigrew' as "undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced."

[181] There is only one line without a correspondent rhyme:—

And sigh'd and *look'd*.

> "Love various minds does variously inspire;
> It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,
> Like that of incense on the altar laid:
> But raging flames tempestuous souls invade;
> A fire which every windy passion blows,
> With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows."

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle bosoms:*[182] Love as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness; such Love as shuts out all other interest, the Love of the Golden Age, was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties; when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetic; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure; and for the first part of his life he looked on Otway with contempt, though at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play *there* was *Nature, which is the greatest beauty.*[183]

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curiosity; by reviving natural sentiments, or impressing new appearances of things: sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with splendid novelty, than awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

[182] This great High Priest of all the Nine was not a confessor to the finer secrets of the human breast. Had the subject of Eloisa fallen into his hands, he would have left but a coarse draft of her passion.—T. CAMPBELL: *Essay on English Poetry.*

[183] Preface to Fresnoy's 'Art of Painting,' 1695. That Dryden at any time "looked on Otway with contempt" is not warranted by any other authority than Johnson's testimony.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity, destiny and contingence; these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are not always understood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he was now no longer at a loss; he had always objections and solutions at command: "verbaque provisam rem"—give him matter for his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter.

In comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprises; from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiary, at least as an imitator.[184]

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring sallies of sentiment, in the irregular and eccentric violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew; as,

> "Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover's pace,
> Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race.
> Amamel flies
> To guard thee from the demons of the air;
> My flaming sword above them to display,
> All keen, and ground upon the edge of day."

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[184] In the plays which have been wrote of late, the two chief persons are most commonly a swearing, drinking, whoring ruffian for a lover, and an impudent, ill-bred Tomrig for a mistress, and these are the fine people of the play: and there is that latitude in this, that almost anything is proper for them to say; but their chief subject is bawdy and profaneness, which they call brisk writing.—SHADWELL: *Pref. to his first Play*, 1668.

And sometimes it issued in absurdities, of which perhaps he was not conscious:

> "Then we upon our orb's last verge shall go,
> And see the ocean leaning on the sky;
> From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,
> And on the lunar world securely pry."

These lines have no meaning; but may we not say, in imitation of Cowley on another book,

> "'Tis so like *sense*, 'twill serve the turn as well"?

This endeavour after the grand and the new produced many sentiments either great or bulky, and many images either just or splendid:

> "I am as free as Nature first made man,
> Ere the base laws of servitude began,
> When wild in woods the noble savage ran.
> —'Tis but because the Living death ne'er knew,
> They fear to prove it as a thing that 's new:
> Let me th' experiment before you try,
> I 'll show you first how easy 'tis to die.
>
> —There with a forest of their darts he strove,
> And stood like *Capaneus* defying Jove,
> With his broad sword the boldest beating down,
> While Fate grew pale lest he should win the town,
> And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book
> To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook.
>
> —I beg no pity for this mouldering clay;
> For if you give it burial, there it takes
> Possession of your earth;
> If burnt, and scatter'd in the air, the winds
> That strew my dust diffuse my royalty,
> And spread me o'er your clime; for where one atom
> Of mine shall light, know there Sebastian reigns."

Of these quotations the two first may be allowed to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I will add only a few more passages; of which the first, though it may perhaps be quite clear in prose, is not too obscure for poetry, as the meaning that it has is noble:

"No, there is a necessity in Fate,
Why still the brave bold man is fortunate;
He keeps his object ever full in sight,
And that assurance holds him firm and right;
True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss,
But right before there is no precipice;
Fear makes men look aside, and so their footing miss."

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent; whether either be just, let the reader judge:

"What precious drops are these,
Which silently each other's track pursue,
Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?

————Resign your castle——
—Enter, brave Sir; for when you speak the word,
The gates shall open of their own accord;
The genius of the place its Lord shall meet,
And bow its towery forehead at your feet."

These bursts of extravagance Dryden calls the "Dalilahs of the Theatre;" and owns that many noisy lines of Maximin and Almanzor call out for vengeance upon him; "but I knew," says he, "that they were bad enough to please, even when I writ them."[185] There is surely reason to suspect that he pleased himself as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had sometimes faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes, like almost all other poets, very frequent use of mythology, and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantic ostentation; as when, in translating Virgil, he says "tack to the larboard"—and "veer starboard;" and talks, in another work, of "Virtue spooming before the wind."[186] His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

[185] Dedication of 'The Spanish Friar,' 1681. See p. 279.

[186] When Virtue spooms before a prosperous gale.
The Hind and the Panther, Part 3.

"They Nature's king through Nature's optics view'd:
Revers'd, they view'd him lessen'd to their eyes."

He had heard of reversing a telescope, and unluckily reverses the object.

He is sometimes unexpectedly mean. When he describes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to stop the Fire of London, what is his expression?

"A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
In firmamental waters dipt above,
Of it a broad *extinguisher* he makes,
And *hoods* the flames that to their quarry strove."

When he describes the Last Day, and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

"When rattling bones together fly
From the four quarters of the sky."

It was indeed never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his Elegy on Cromwell:

"No sooner was the Frenchman's cause embrac'd,
Than the *light Monsieur* the *grave Don* outweigh'd;
His fortune turn'd the scale———"

He had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to show, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words, which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraîcheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators.[187]

These are his faults of affectation; his faults of negligence are beyond recital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence,

[187] Mr. Mitford has printed at the end of his 'Life of Dryden' a "list of some unusual poetical and other obsolete words and phrases used by Dryden in his various poems."

but snatched in haste what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection; nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he should be opposed. He had more music than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing therefore in the highest place, he had no care to rise by contending with himself; but, while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought sufficient he did not stop to make better; and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he dismissed from his thoughts; and I believe there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hastiness of his productions might be the effect of necessity; but his subsequent neglect could hardly have any other cause than impatience of study.[188]

What can be said of his versification will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope:

> "Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full-resounding line,
> The long majestic march, and energy divine."

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers; but the full force of our language was not yet felt; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to choose the flowing and the sonorous words, to vary the pauses and adjust the accents, to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the

[188] Of Dryden's rapidity in composition we have unmistakeable proof in the production of his 'Britannia Rediviva.' The Prince commemorated in the poem was born on the 10th of June, 1688, and Lord Middleton's "Let this be printed" is dated "June the 19th, 1688." The poem contains 364 lines.

use, he established it.[189] The triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's 'Homer;' but it is to be found in Phaer's 'Virgil,' written in the reign of Mary, and in Hall's Satires, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The Alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound.[190] We had a longer measure of fourteen syllables, into which the 'Æneid' was translated by Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers, of which Chapman's 'Iliad' was, I believe, the last.

The two first lines of Phaer's third 'Æneid' will exemplify this measure:

> "When Asia's state was overthrown, and Priam's kingdom stout,
> All guiltless, by the power of gods above was rooted out."

As these lines had their break, or *cæsura*, always at the eighth syllable, it was thought, in time, commodious to divide them: and quatrains of lines, alternately, consisting of eight and six syllables, make the most soft and pleasing of our lyric measures, as,

> "Relentless Time, destroying power,
> Which stone and brass obey,
> Who giv'st to ev'ry flying hour
> To work some new decay."

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, some poems, as Drayton's 'Polyolbion,' were wholly written; and sometimes the measures of twelve and fourteen syllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the first that inserted the Alexandrine at pleasure among the heroic lines of ten syllables, and from him Dryden professes to have adopted it.

The triplet and Alexandrine are not universally approved. Swift always censured them, and wrote some lines to ridicule

[189] He calls triplets and Alexandrines "the Magna Charta of heroic poetry." —*Ded. of Æneid*, 1697.

[190] The Alexandrine was in use in English poetry long before Spenser, though not employed in the same marked manner. See Boswell on the Phraseology and Metre of Shakespeare, in Malone's Shak. by Bos. i. 539.

them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the essence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule—a rule, however, lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees differently combined; the English heroic admits of acute or grave syllables variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the triplet is the same; the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet, but is on a sudden surprised with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice, did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and consequently excluding all casualty, we must allow that triplets and Alexandrines, inserted by caprice, are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet, to make our poetry exact, there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes convenient to the poet. Fenton was of opinion that Dryden was too liberal, and Pope too sparing, in their use.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable:

> "Together o'er the Alps methinks we fly,
> Fir'd with ideas of fair *Italy*."
>
> POPE: *Epistle to Jervas.*

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first:

> "Laugh, all the powers that favour *tyranny*,
> And all the standing army of the sky."

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet, which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the sixth syllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected:

> "And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne."

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that "he could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply." Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught "sapere et fari," to think naturally and express forcibly. Though Davies has reasoned in rhyme before him, it may be perhaps maintained that he was the first who joined argument with poetry. He showed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, "lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit." He found it brick, and he left it marble.[191]

[191] I think Dryden's translations from Boccace are the best, at least the most poetical of his poems. But as a poet he is no great favourite of mine. I admire his talents and genius highly, but his is not a poetical genius. The only qualities I can find in Dryden that are *essentially* poetical are a certain ardour and impetuosity of mind, with an excellent ear. It may seem strange that I do not add to this, great command of language: *that* he certainly has, and of such language too as it is desirable that a poet should possess, or rather that he should not be without. But it is not language that is, in the highest sense of the word, poetical, being neither of the imagination nor of the passions; I mean the amiable, the ennobling, or the intense passions. I do not mean to say that there is nothing of this in Dryden, but as little I think as is possible, considering how much he has written. You will easily understand

The invocation before the Georgics is here inserted from Mr. Milbourne's version, that, according to his own proposal, his verses may be compared with those which he censures.

What makes the richest *tilth*, beneath what signs
To *plough*, and when to match your *elms* and *vines*;
What care with *flocks*, and what with *herds* agrees,
And all the management of frugal *bees*;
I sing, *Mæcenas!* Ye immensely clear,
Vast orbs of light, which guide the rolling year;
Bacchus, and mother *Ceres*, if by you
We fat'ning *corn* for hungry *mast* pursue,
If, taught by you, we first the *cluster* prest,
And *thin cold streams* with *sprightly juice* refresht;
Ye *fawns*, the present *numens* of the field,
Wood-Nymphs and *fawns*, your kind assistance yield;
Your gifts I sing: and thou, at whose fear'd stroke
From rending earth the fiery *courser* broke,
Great *Neptune*, O assist my artful song!
And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
Whose snowy heifers on her flowry plains
In mighty herds the *Cæan Isle* maintains!
Pan, happy shepherd, if thy cares divine
E'er to improve thy *Mænalus* incline,
Leave thy *Lycæan wood* and *native grove*,
And with thy lucky smiles our work approve;
Be *Pallas* too, sweet oil's inventor, kind;
And he who first the crooked *plough* design'd!

---

my meaning, when I refer to his versification of Palamon and Arcite, as contrasted with the language of Chaucer. Dryden had neither a tender heart nor a lofty sense of moral dignity. Whenever his language is poetically impassioned, it is mostly upon unpleasing subjects, such as the follies, vices, and crimes of classes of men or of individuals. That his cannot be the language of imagination must have necessarily followed from this,—that there is not a single image from nature in the whole body of his works; and in his translations from Virgil, wherever Virgil can be fairly said to have his *eye* upon his object, Dryden always spoils the passage. His love is nothing but sensuality and appetite: he had no other notion of the passion.—WORDSWORTH *to* Sir WALTER SCOTT; Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vol. ii. p. 287, sec. ed.

It is almost needless after this to say that I mean Dryden, whose versification I take to be the most musical that has yet appeared in rhyme. Round, sweet, pompous, spirited, and various; it flows with such a happy volubility, such an animated and masterly negligence, as I am afraid will not soon be excelled. From the fineness of his ear, his prose, too, is perhaps the sweetest, the most mellow and generous, that the English language has yet produced. —ARMSTRONG: *Miscellanies*, ii. 162.

Dryden always gives me the idea of being capable of doing much more than he did.—T. MOORE: *Diary*, 27th Aug. 1825.

Sylvanus, god of all the woods, appear,
Whose hands a new-drawn tender *cypress* bear!
Ye *gods* and *goddesses*, who e'er with love
Would guard our pastures, and our fields improve;
You, who new plants from unsown lands supply,
And with condensing clouds obscure the sky,
And drop 'em softly thence in fruitfull showers;
Assist my enterprize, ye gentler powers!

And thou, great *Cæsar!* tho we know not yet
Among what gods thou'lt fix thy lofty seat;
Whether thou 'lt be the kind *tutelar god*
Of thy own *Rome*, or with thy awfull nod
Guide the vast world, while thy great hand shall bear
The fruits and seasons of the turning year,
And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles wear;
Whether thou 'lt all the boundless ocean sway,
And sea-men only to thyself shall pray,
Thule, the farthest island, kneel to thee,
And, that thou may'st her son by marriage be,
Tethys will for the happy purchase yield
To make a *dowry* of her watry field:
Whether thou 'lt add to heaven a *brighter sign*,
And o'er the *summer months* serenely shine;
Where between *Cancer* and *Erigone*
There yet remains a spacious *room* for thee;
Where the hot *Scorpion* too his arms declines,
And more to thee than half his *arch* resigns;
Whate'er thou 'lt be; for sure the realms below
No just pretence to thy command can show;
No such ambition sways thy vast desires,
Tho *Greece* her own *Elysian Fields* admires,
And now, at last, contented *Proserpine*
Can all her mother's earnest prayers decline.
Whate'er thou 'lt be, O guide our gentle course,
And with thy smiles our bold attempts enforce;
With me th' unknowing *rustics* wants relieve,
And, tho on earth, our sacred vows receive!

The original of the following letter is preserved in the Library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the public by the Rev. Dr. Vyse.

Dryden to his Sons in Italy.

MS. in Lambeth Library, marked No. 933, [*Gibson Papers*, vol. i.] p. 56.[192]

Sept. the 3rd, our Style [1697].

Dear Sons,—Being now at Sir William Bowyer's in the country,[193] I cannot write at large, because I find myself somewhat indisposed with a cold, and am thick of hearing, rather worse than I was in town. I am glad to find, by your letter of July 26th, your style, that you are both in health; but wonder you should think me so negligent as to forget to give you an account of the ship in which your parcel is to come. I have written to you two or three letters concerning it, which I have sent by safe hands, as I told you, and doubt not but you have them before this can arrive to you. Being out of town, I have forgotten the ship's name, which your mother will inquire, and put it into her letter, which is joined with mine. But the master's name I remember: he is called Mr. Ralph Thorp; the ship is bound to Leghorn, consigned to Mr. Peter and Mr. Tho. Ball, merchants. I am of your opinion, that by Tonson's means almost all our letters have miscarried for this last year. But, however, he has missed of his design in the Dedication, though he had prepared the book for it; for in every figure of Æneas he has caused him to be drawn like King William, with a hooked nose.[194]

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[192] (*Superscribed*)

"Al illustrissimo Sig^re^
Carlo Dryden
Camariere d' Honore A. S. S.
In Roma.
Franca per Mantoua."

[193] At Denham Court, in Buckinghamshire, where, as Dryden himself tells us in the Postscript to his Virgil, he translated the first Georgic and the greatest part of the last Æneid.

[194] Among the Harleian MSS. in the Museum are the following verses:—

To be published in the next edition of Dryden's Virgil.

Old Jacob, by deep judgment sway'd
To please the wise beholders,
Has placed old Nassau's hook-nos'd head
On poor Æneas' shoulders.
To make the parallel hold tack,
Methinks there 's little lacking;
One took his father pick-a-pack,
And t' other sent his packing.

After my return to town, I intend to alter a play of Sir Robert Howard's, written long since, and lately put into my hands: 'tis called 'The Conquest of China by the Tartars.' It will cost me six weeks' study, with the probable benefit of a hundred pounds.[195] In the mean time I am writing a song for St. Cecilia's Feast, who, you know, is the patroness of music. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial; but I could not deny the Stewards of the Feast, who came in a body to me to desire that kindness, one of them being Mr. Bridgeman,[196] whose parents are your mother's friends. I hope to send you thirty guineas between Michaelmas and Christmas, of which I will give you an account when I come to town. I remember the counsel you give me in your letter; but dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent; yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature, and keep in my just resentments against that degenerate order. In the mean time I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake; being assured, beforehand, never to be rewarded, though the times should alter. Towards the latter end of this month, September, Charles will begin to recover his perfect health, according to his nativity, which, casting it myself, I am sure is true, and all things hitherto have happened accordingly to the very time that I predicted them: I hope at the same time to recover more health, according to my age. Remember me to poor Harry, whose prayers I earnestly desire. My Virgil succeeds in the world beyond its desert or my expectation. You know the profits might have

---

[195] This was said in 1697, nine years after Shadwell had received 130*l.* for his third day of 'The Squire of Alsatia,' at single prices, or prices at which the play was first performed. Downes, who tells us this, adds (see p. 390) that this was the greatest receipt at Drury Lane in his time (prior to 1708) at single prices.

I have compiled the following statement of sums known to have been given by booksellers for the copyrights of plays with all the accuracy I have been able to give to it:—

			£.	s.	d.
1682	Otway	Venice Preserved	15	0	0
1691	Dryden	Cleomenes	31	10	0
1694	Southerne	Fatal Marriage	36	0	0
1704	Steele	Lying Lover	21	0	0
1705	Farquhar	Recruiting Officer	15	15	0
1706	,,	Beaux' Stratagem	30	0	0
1706	Smith	Phædra and Hippolitus	50	0	0
1707	Cibber	Double Gallant	15	15	0
1708	Dennis	Appius and Virginia	21	0	0
1709	Centlivre	The Busy Body	10	10	0
1713	Rowe	Jane Shore	50	15	0
1715	,,	Lady Jane Grey	75	0	0
1715	Addison	The Drummer	50	0	0
1718	Cibber	The Non-Juror	105	0	0
1719	Southerne	Spartan Dame	120	0	0
1726	Moore Smyth	The Rival Modes	105	0	0

[196] Grandson to Lord Keeper Bridgeman.

been more ;[197] but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them: but I never can repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer. It has pleased God to raise up many friends to me amongst my enemies, though they who ought to have been my friends are negligent of me. I am called to dinner, and cannot go on with this letter, which I desire you to excuse; and am

Your most affectionate father,

JOHN DRYDEN.[198]

---

[197] That is, if he had dedicated his 'Virgil' to King William.

[198] "I cannot pass by that admirable English poet [Dryden] without endeavouring to make his country sensible of the obligations they have to his muse. Whether they consider the flowing grace of his versification, the vigorous sallies of his fancy, or the peculiar delicacy of his periods, they all discover excellences never to be enough admired. If they trace him from the first productions of his youth to the last performances of his age, they will find that as the tyranny of rhyme never imposed on the perspicuity of his sense, so a languid sense never wanted to be set off by the harmony of rhyme. And as his earlier works wanted no maturity, so his latter wanted no force or spirit. The falling off of his hair had no other consequence than to make his laurels be seen the more.

"As a translator he was just; as an inventor he was rich. His versions of some parts of Lucretius, Horace, Homer, and Virgil, throughout, gave him a just pretence to that compliment which was made to Monsieur d'Ablancourt, a celebrated French translator: *It is uncertain who have the greatest obligation to him, the dead or the living.*

"With all these wondrous talents he was libelled in his lifetime by the very men who had no other excellences but as they were his imitators. Where he was allowed to have sentiments superior to all others, they charged him with theft. But how did he steal? No otherwise than like those who steal beggars' children, only to clothe them the better."—GARTH: *Pref. to Ovid's Metamorphoses.*

EDITOR'S APPENDIX—A.

Memorial from the King's Players.

[*From Malone's Life of Dryden*, p. 73. *Probably addressed to the Lord Chamberlain in* 1678. *The original in* 1800 *in the possession of Isaac Reed.*]

Whereas upon Mr. Dryden's binding himself to write three playes a yeere, he the said Mr. Dryden was admitted and continued as a Sharer in the King's Play-house for diverse years, and received for his share and a quarter, three or four hundred pounds, *communibus annis*; but though he received the moneys, we received not the playes, not one in a yeare. After which, the House being burnt, the Company in building another contracted great debts, so that the Shares fell much short of what they were formerly. Thereupon Mr. Dryden complaining to the Company of his want of profitt, the Company was so kind to him, that they not only did not presse him for the playes which he so engaged to write for them, and for which he was paid beforehand, but they did also, at his earnest request, give him a third day for his last new play, called All for Love; and at the receipt of the money of the said third day, he acknowledged it as a guift, and a particular kindnesse of the Company. Yet notwithstanding this kind proceeding, Mr. Dryden has now, jointly with Mr. Lee (who was in pension with us to the last day of our playing, and shall continue), written a play called Oedipus, and given it to the Duke's Company, contrary to his said agreement, his promise, and all gratitude, to the great prejudice and almost undoing of the Company, they being the only poets remaining to us. Mr. Crowne, being under the like agreement with the Duke's House, writt a play called The Destruction of Jerusalem, and being forced by their refusall of it to bring it to us, the said Company compelled us, after the studying of it, and a vast expense in scenes and cloathes, to buy off their clayme, by paying all the pension he had received from them, amounting to one hundred and twelve pounds paid by the King's Company, besides neere forty pounds he the said Mr. Crowne paid out of his owne pocket.

These things considered, if, notwithstanding Mr. Dryden's said agreement, promise, and moneys freely given him for his said last new play, and the many titles we have to his writings, this play be judged away from us, we must submit.

(Signed) Charles Killigrew.
Charles Hart.
Nich. Burt.
Cardell Goodman.
Mic. Mohun.

APPENDIX—B.[199]

Dryden to the Earl of Chesterfield.[200]

London, February 17, 1696.

My Lord,—I have hitherto wanted confidence to give your Lordship the trouble of a letter, which I designed almost a year together, and am now forced to take this opportunity or wholly lose it. My translation of Virgil is already in the press, and I cannot possibly defer the publication of it any longer than Midsummer term at farthest. I have hindered it thus long in hopes of his return for whom and for my conscience I have suffered, that I might have laid my author at his feet; but now, finding that God's time for ending our miseries is not yet, I have been advised to make three several dedications of the Eclogues, the Georgics, and the Æneid. The Eclogues have been desired a year ago by my Lord Clifford, whose father, the Treasurer, was my patron; the Æneids by the Marquis of Normanby; and if I durst presume so far, I would humbly offer the Georgics to your Lordship's patronage. They are not, I confess, the most specious part of Virgil, but in revenge they are his masterpiece; in which he has not only outdone all other poets, but himself.

Accordingly I have laboured, and I may say have cultivated, the Georgics with more care than any other part of him, and, as I think myself, with more success. 'Tis suitable to the retired life which you have chosen, and to your studies of philosophy. From the first hour since I have had the happiness of being known to your Lordship I have always preferred you in my poor esteem to any other nobleman, and that in all respects. And you may please to believe me as an honest man that I have not the least consideration of any profit in this address, but only of honouring myself by dedicating to you. By this time, my Lord, you may perceive why I have been solicitous to procure the favour of your being one of the subscribers to this work. And to return to the beginning of my letter, 'twas upon a just diffidence of my success in this presumption that I have humoured my natural bashfulness in not addressing you sooner. But as teeming women must speak at last or lose their longing, so I am constrained to beg that I may not miscarry of my translation, who am, with all manner of humility,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

John Dryden.

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[199] See note to Johnson's 'Advertisement' before this volume.

[200] This characteristic correspondence, discovered since Malone and Scott wrote, was first printed in the 'Correspondence of the Second Earl of Chesterfield' (the handsome Earl), 1 vol. 8vo. 1829.

Earl of Chesterfield to Dryden.

February the 18th, 1697.

Sir,—When I consider that the greatest men are desirous of being distinguished by some mark of your esteem, I am surprised at the obligation that you have laid upon me, by intending, as you mention, to place my name before some of your works. It looks as if you were tired with the Court, and would now think of a hermitage, or of a country gentleman, who, being in no post whereby he may merit such a favour, must value it the more, as proceeding from no other motive than your kindness, which I shall always endeavour to deserve, by being with great reality, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

Chesterfield.

Earl of Chesterfield to Dryden.

To Mr. Dryden upon his Dedication of his Translation of Virgil's Georgics to me and sending me the book.

August the 10th, 1697.

Sir,—Though I have never been ambitious of being obliged by many men, yet I am very much pleas'd with the being so by Mr. Dryden. Not out of vanity, in having my inconsiderable name placed (by so great a man) in the front of one of his works, but because it gives the world a testimony of his friendship to me. I confess that I have always esteemed you the Homer of this age, and I am sure that you have had that one advantage far above him, for he never shined much but in the dark—I mean till he was dead; and you have had that glory the greatest part of your life. But I do not pretend to offer the incense of praise to him who is the best teacher of others how to give it, my intention being only at this time to express some part of my resentments for the invaluable present that you have made me, and to desire your acceptance by this bearer of a small mark of those respects which shall ever be paid you by,

Sir, your most humble servant,

Chesterfield.

Dryden to the Earl of Chesterfield.

Mr. Dryden's Answer to my Letter on the other side.

August 18th, 1697.

My Lord,—I cannot pretend to acknowledge, as I ought, the noble present which I have received from your Lordship, any more than I can pretend to have deserved it. I will not think that, like Sylla, you rewarded a bad poet, and, at the same time, commanded him to write no more, for the greatest value I can put upon myself is your favourable opinion of my verses. I am *glad* that they have pleased the world, but I am *proud* that they have pleased your Lordship. By the largeness of your present, I must conclude that you considered who gave, and not who was to receive; and I know but one who made this reflection before your Lordship, and

that was Alexander. I am sure I need not say that I have avoided flattery in my Dedication, for your character was established with all who had the honour of knowing you. I have only spread it amongst those who had not that happiness, as being from the bottom of my heart, and without poetry, your Lordship's most obedient and most obliged servant,

JOHN DRYDEN.

APPENDIX—C.

LIST OF DRYDEN'S PLAYS.

Finding that several of my friends, in buying my plays, &c. bound together, have been imposed on by the booksellers foisting in a play which is not mine [The Mistaken Husband], I have here [King Arthur, 4to. 1691] to prevent this for the future set down a catalogue of my Plays and Poems in quarto, putting the plays in the order I wrote them.—JOHN DRYDEN.

Name.	Nature.	By whom acted.	First Night.	Entered at Stationers' Hall.	Published (all in 4to.).
The Wild Gallant – –	Comedy	The King's Servants.	5 Feb. 1662-3	7 Aug. 1667	1669
The Rival Ladies – –	Tragi-Comedy	,,	– –	27 June 1664	1664
The Indian Emperor –	Tragedy	,,	– –	26 May 1665	1667
Secret Love; or, The Maiden Queen.	Comedy	,,	2 Mar. 1666-7	7 Aug. 1667	1668
Sir Martin Marall – –	,,	The Duke's Servants.	15 Aug. 1667	24 June 1668	1668
The Tempest – – –	,,	,,	7 Nov. 1667	8 Jan. 1669-70	1670
An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer.	,,	The King's Servants.	12 June, 1668	20 Nov. 1668	1671
Tyrannick Love; or, The Royal Martyr.	Tragedy	,,	Unknown.	14 July 1669	1670
The Conquest of Granada. Two Parts.	,,	,,		20 Feb. 1670-1	1672
Marriage A-la-mode – –	Comedy	,,		18 Mar. 1672-3	1673
The Assignation; or, Love in a Nunnery.	,,	,,		– –	1673
Amboyna – – – –	Tragedy	,,		26 June 1673	1673
The State of Innocence –	Opera	,,		17 April 1674	1674
Aurengzebe – – –	Tragedy	,,		29 Nov. 1675	1676
All for Love – – –	,,	,,		31 Jan. 1677-8	1678
The Kind Keeper; or, Mr. Limberham.	Comedy	The Duke's Servants.		– –	1678
Œdipus – – – – –	Tragedy	,,		– –	1679
Troilus and Cressida –	,,	,,		14 April 1679	1679
The Spanish Friar – –	Tragi-Comedy	,,		– –	1681
The Duke of Guise – –	Tragedy	The United Companies.		– –	1683
Albion and Albanius –	Opera	,,		– –	1685
Don Sebastian – – –	Tragedy	,,		– –	1690
Amphitryon – – –	Comedy	,,		– –	1690
King Arthur – – –	Opera	,,		– –	1691
Cleomenes – – – –	Tragedy	,,		– –	1692
Love Triumphant – –	Tragi-Comedy	,,		– –	1694

*** I have enlarged this list from Malone's reprint and from other sources. The entries in the column "First Night" have been supplied from Pepys, Evelyn, and the MS. Lists of Plays at which King Charles II. was present, still preserved in the Lord Chamberlain's Office.

END OF VOL. I.

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